THE NEW JERUSALEM: A BIBLICAL MODEL OF DECONSTRUCTION AND RECONSTRUCTION TO CREATE THE "IDEAL CHURCH"

Angela D. Washington

B.A., Beulah Heights Bible College, 1998
M.Div., Interdenominational Theological Center, 2002

Mentors
Felix D. Burrows, Sr., D.Min.
Kent L. Poindexter, D.Min.

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by

Angela D. Washington

United Theological Seminary, 2007

Mentors

Felix D. Burrows, Sr.
Kent L. Poindexter

Date: _____

Approved:

Mentor(s)

Director, Doctoral Studies

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ABSTRACT

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The objective of this project was to systematically deconstruct and then reconstruct a congregation's values and processes based on a biblical model of discipleship and evangelism resulting in congregational revitalization, community restoration, empowerment and common ground between the local church and the community. The context was an inner-city African-American congregation. An "Ideal Church" emerged that grew the congregation numerically and increased ministry participation for both congregation and community. The model was tested using workshops, community awareness forums, Bible studies, one-on-one testimonials and pre and post test questionnaires.

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The decision to pursue the Doctor of Ministry degree was based on the prodding and encouragement of my husband and best friend, Dr. Felix D. Burrows, Sr. who also serves as a mentor in this program. After long and careful discernment and prayer, the decision was made in consultation with my mother Mrs. Lydia S. Washington and my children. My husband stood for my highest possibility in academic achievement and insisted that I remove my lamp from under the bushel and let it shine on the hill that others may be encouraged to go and do likewise.

I give thanks, honor, glory and praise to God in Christ Jesus for providing everything I needed to complete this program. I am forever grateful to the administration and faculty of the United Theological Seminary; mentor, Dr. Kent L. Poindexter for his guidance, critique and criticism, the members of my peer group; Professional Associates: Dr. F. Douglas Powe, Ph.D. for his evangelistic critique and recommendations, Dr. Jennifer Gordon, Ph.D. for her ongoing editorial critique and criticism, and Dr. Mike Bowie, D.Min., for his expertise in congregational development and willingness to sit on the final exam committee; and my Context Associates Oliver Green, Margie Goodwin, Ford Sanders, Sterling Montgomery, Jr. and Alfred Goodwin.

A special note of gratitude is extended to the officers and members of Asbury Mount Olive United Methodist Church for their love, support and trust in my leadership during this phase of my professional development and journey.

DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to my father, Clarence Richard "Rico" Washington; a man and father who has unselfishly given me unnumbered and priceless experiences and values in life. It is dedicated to my father who created in me an inner hunger to advance and excel by teaching me the meaning of "tough love," and as a result, I have gained the fortitude to persevere in difficult and challenging situations. This project is dedicated to my father who taught me how to succeed against the odds, as he modeled for me the tenacity needed to provide for our family with limited education and support. Finally, this project is dedicated to my father because he also taught me how to be "tender hearted." My father is tall, strong, and proud; yet exhibits enough character and confidence to be compassionate and gentle when necessary; and for all these things, I will forever be eternally grateful. "Daddy" I love you.

INTRODUCTION

Congregational Development and Redevelopment are subjects that are not new to the 21st century church. In fact, numerous scholars, theologians and pastoral practitioners have dedicated a significant portion of their ministry vocation to the study, understanding and praxis of models that seek to maximize this critical need in the life of mainstream churches across America. The suggested and recommended models have extended from one extreme to the next; varying in scope, cost and degree of difficult to administer. Extensive dialogue and discourse has ensued regarding the nature of discipleship, evangelism and church growth and their impact on congregational effectiveness. This ongoing debate has illuminated an acute need to further equip and empower church leaders and practitioners. The church must see the need to make transformative adjustments at its institutional core if it is going to remain vital and keep pace with the ever changing demands of our current society today.

With this is mind, the writer believes that a congregation and community should undergo a period of deconstruction that leads to reconstruction in order to reach the apex of its potential. Deconstruction must happen within the church, within the life of the community, and in the minds of those life long residents who remain in the area and in the attitudes and beliefs of the state and local governmental officials. Deconstruction must also take place in the long standing values and beliefs held by the dominate culture. This deconstruction process will give way to a more inclusive and communal understanding of Shalom or community.

The process of reconstruction is one of preparing the hearts and minds of the people of the church as well as the community in order to adopt and accept a new creation that will emerge from collaborative participation and investment in a community. This collaborative participation will not only be valued by residents and those transient persons who work in the area.

The writer believes that if the church is to meet the demands of the inner city and also be faithful to the biblical mandate of making disciples of all people, it must begin by teaching the congregation how to be faithful to scripture. The author has said, "The church can no longer afford the luxury of living in isolation, implementing programs that only serve our own interest and then ignore the needs of those around us." In order for the church to build community and meet the needs of those around it, there must be intentional church-wide discipleship, evangelism, stewardship and Christian education. This will lead to spiritual, missional, financial, numerical and programmatic church growth.

Chapter One of this focuses on the background of the author and her spiritual journey and how she arrived at the context in which she continues to fulfill her calling. This section also analyzes the context which includes the demographics of the community and outlines the scope and ministry of the church. Chapter Two presents some of the literature the author utilized in developing this project. Chapter Three builds a framework and establishes a theoretical foundation for the model. It includes theological, biblical, and historical foundations. Chapter Four discusses the methodology and the design of the model used in the field experience. Chapter Five discusses the field experience (mentioned earlier). It contains data collection methods and data analysis

objectives. Finally, Chapter Six presents the author's reflections on the field experience, summation and conclusion. The author also discusses about what could have been done differently and offers suggestions to pastors of urban congregations on how to effectively deconstruct and reconstruct congregations that they may reach optimum effectiveness in making disciples of Jesus Christ and sustaining viable relationships with the community.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

The ministry focus of this project was to create the church within the church as the basis of deconstruction that leads to the reconstruction of an "Ideal Church" that can emerge to sustain both a congregation and community. The church within the church is a process of developing a core group of members who are willing to create community, solve problems, vision together and implement evangelism and discipleship strategies. This initial group will then have the responsibility of replicating the process with other members of the congregation in small groups. The ultimate result of this process is the deconstruction and reconstruction of the total church congregation systematically over a sustained period of time creating the 'Ideal Church". The author looked at the challenges of church revitalization in her context, Asbury Mount Olive United Methodist Church, which is an urban African American congregation located in the midst of a rapidly transitioning community.

Members of Asbury Mount Olive recognized that the needs of the congregation and the surrounding community have changed from its humble beginnings. Likewise, this author has also recognized tremendous spiritual growth and maturity from the time she entered the process of becoming a fully ordination pastor. It is the author's contention that like herself, a period of deconstruction is critical if the church is to ever be what God has intended it to be. There can be no true reconstruction of the body of Christ until the

old self and old nature is deconstructed. Scripture reminds us that it is unwise to continue putting new wine into old wineskins. The author believes that for years, churches similar to Asbury Mount Olive have tried to revitalize themselves by putting "new wine in old wineskins" with led to minimal success. She believes that only when the deconstruction of the old is completed that new wine can be poured into new wineskins and true reconstruction and revitalization of existing congregations can occur.

The following outlines how this ministry focus and project took shape by examining the life and spiritual journey of the author and how she and her context came into being. The review of the author's spiritual journey and current context for her ministry will support the critical need of a deconstruction/reconstruction model.

Reflecting back from where I am

December 9, 2005 was a day that this author will would never forget. This was the day that she realized fully how awesome it is to comprehend the length and breath of self-discovery. It was the day that everything came together in a comprehensive revelation of what happens when you risk everything to deconstruct years of pain and abuse only to reconstruct a reality of call and purpose for one's life. She says,

> I've decided not to live the same vacant and somewhat exhausted life I lived in previous years and I'm inviting you to join me on this journey. I understand what a blessing it is to be able to inhale the essence of life what a tragedy it is to be alive and choose not to live. There are many reasons for not experiencing a life of love to the fullest. Our motives possibly are present due to heartaches, disappointment, and the lack of accountability, one to another. We have taken our delicate self-images into situations where they were battered, where hope died and our worst nightmares came true.

Consequently, our ego has built walls that stop the flow of love, not fully understanding that love is the greatest gift of God. Living our love stories requires sensitivity, openness and most of all vulnerability. I think one of the essentials is to value oneself. Value of self produces love for others. It is like currency you can draw from a bank account, if you value yourself a great deal, you actually have something to give to others. If you do not value yourself, you have nothing to draw upon.

Once you began to value yourself, you can walk boldly knowing that you are created in the image of God. There is a divine love that dwells inside of each of us and our individual gifts and talents. We are born with a purpose and we need to understand that we are not alone. We are connected to God and this earth to be in rhythm with how she exists and what she brings forth.

The mystery of love hasn't changed across the centuries; yet we have fallen short. Love is action, love is movement, and there is no love without God. When our hearts dry up, it may appear that love has dried up; this is not the case. Surrender to the love story of life and allow that seed of love that was planted inside of you on the day of creation to come forth; release and let go of the pain and discomfort of yesterday. Not letting go is a trick of the enemy to prevent us from experiencing the fullness of abundant life.

Love is meant to heal, renew, make safe, inspire with power, make us certain without doubt and cast out fear. So why not start today, one step at a time, moving from pain to pleasure, emptiness to wholeness, sadness to joy and sharing your great gift of self on this journey, living your love story.[1]

[1] Angela D. Washington, "Journey of Life" (excerpt from personal journal of author, Atlanta, Georgia, 9, December 2005).

The following is a small, yet significant glimpse into the life of author, Angela Delorse Washington. She was born in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1959 to the parents of Clarence Richard Washington and Lydia Jo-Ann Springer Washington. Angela's mother Lydia was raised in a God fearing, church going home where she was very close to her parents and siblings. The "saintly" family structure was very important and reinforced on a regularly bases. Angela's maternal grandmother Lydia, owned a little ice cream parlor. Her grandfather, A. Wenton Springer, sold tomatoes, greens, watermelon, squash and peppers that they grew on their 20 acres farm. Oak and pecan trees surrounded their farm. The Springer's also owned two other houses that they rented out, securing them financially and establishing them as leaders in the community.

Angela's father Clarence Washington, affectionately known as "Rico" was the third child to be born to his mother and father. However, he was the first child to survive beyond 6 months of age, due to his mother's unhealthy pregnancies. Being a male child born with medical issues in the late 1930's, made life more difficult for him. There was no adequate medical treatment for African Americans in the "Deep South." Therefore, Rico surmised early on that he had to fight for everything he got and hold on tight so that he would not lose it. The result was that he developed a strong sense of survival.

Rico and Lydia met while attending a summer convocation given by the Church of God in Christ in August of 1957; Lydia was 17 years old and Rico was about 21 years old. Lydia had graduated early from high school that year and had immediately enrolled in nursing school. Lydia was gracefully petite, with bouncy light brown hair that fell on her shoulders. She had honey-colored skin and piercing blue gray eyes. As fate would have it, Rico was taking a vacation from his 3 part-time jobs that same week. Rico was 6

feet 2 inch tall, skin tone dark as coal and smooth as velvet. The convocation provided a much deserved break from their routine. For them it was love at first sight and they were married in less than one year, on March 6, 1958.

Walking, Talking and the Fear of Rico

When Angela was a child, one day while sitting at the foot of her bed she realized that in her mind, her father was indeed the "God of the Old Testament". He had laws in place as well as "do's and don'ts" that they had to live by. However, she did not remember her father demonstrating much "grace". Rico spoke and things happened. When Rico judged, "damnation" came upon the house. The realization and "love of God" was represented in his love, yet Angela felt a lack of "mercy" from her father. God did not have arms because Angela's father didn't give hugs. God did not speak in an audible voice because Rico hardly ever spoke the words I Love You. Therefore, God was a God that lacked intimacy and reigned far, far away.

Angela worked hard as a child to do all the right things so that she would bring joy to her parents and make them proud of her. Angela was told to learn to play the piano so she did. She was told that it would be good for her to participate in the community band so she learned to play the flute and percussion instruments as well. Whatever her parents asked of her, Angela felt it was her duty as her father's firstborn child and daughter to be obedient to her parent's requests. She felt that her submission to their demands would secure their love and acceptance.

Angela had two younger sisters, Kimberly and Karen. Their parents, Lydia and Clarence Washington taught them to love, respect and forgive one another without regard for personal boundaries. Angela's mother was a quiet woman, yet very much in control. She had a way of manipulating any situation based upon how she was raised by her strict parents, who were members of the Church of God in Christ. Lydia, like Angela, was not the oldest of three daughters yet she was pushed to succeed no matter what.

Lydia S. Washington was the type of woman that felt that her daughters were a large part of her adornments. She laid a fundamental foundation for her daughters, which spoke volumes to the unspoken rule that failure was not acceptable for the Washington sisters. This allowed "Mother" Washington's life to become noteworthy through her children's accomplishments.

In retrospect, Angela felt that her childhood was based on fairytales and the old television sitcom "Father Knows Best." Although her father was somewhat disconnected from the family, the "normal" routine for middle class America was characteristically depicted in their household. Every morning, Lydia would prepare breakfast for Angela and her sisters. Every night, her family sat at the dining room table for dinner, sharing what went on during the day. Angela's father, Rico, would not participate in these family activities because he worked the graveyard shift from 11:00 pm till 7:00 am, and would have breakfast with Lydia after Angela and her sisters had gone to school.

COGIC Roots and the Meaning of Being Saved

Angela's church foundation was established through the Jones Avenue Church of God in Christ, in Atlanta, Georgia. Her pastor was Bishop George E. Bradley. She attended church religiously four to five times a week. The unique thing about attending church was that Angela could have gone to church seven days a week. Angela truly adored the concept of "church" and still does. The members of Jones Avenue seemed to be openly loving and concerned about one another. The worship services were exciting and the messages always inspired her.

Angela lived to attend church and was quite pleased that she could actually attend 6 days a week. Angela participated in the choir, and the Sunshine Band, which is a lot like the United Methodist vacation bible school, except the Sunshine Band met the second and fourth Saturday of the month all year long. Angela was constantly thirsty for the Word of God.

Sunday morning services were the reason she got out of bed. She would anticipate the passionate spirit-filled testimonies that were shared at 10:30 am, preceding 11:00 am worship service. People would sing their favorite songs and open with a strong traditional greeting "Giving honor to God, pastor, saints and friends. I just want to thank God for being in the house of the Lord one more time," and the congregation would respond, "Amen." The excitement was so powerful that Angela would wonder when she would be old enough to testify about how much she loved God as well.

At Jones Avenue, there was an older woman who never failed to be at the Sunday night service. She was lovingly addressed as "Mother Banks." Mother Banks sat on the left side of the church where all of the other mothers of the church sat during service. She

kept this large base drum between her legs and every time someone would begin a new song, she would maintain a steady rhythm, not too fast or not too slow, but just right for that particular song. Angela recalls one Sunday night, Mother Banks started beating her drum with a resounding "boom, boom, boom," and out of nowhere, folk began joining in with hand clapping and feet stomping. No one sang at first, but the low rhythmic sound was beckoning Angela like the undercurrent of an ocean wave. This was a new and somewhat uneasy feeling for her, yet something inside her spoke peace.

Two days before Angela's 10th birthday, she felt the need to have a more intimate relationship with God. See whispered in her mother's ear, "I want to sing a song," her mother quickly stood up and the hand clapping, feet stomping of the congregation was brought down to a mere rumbling behind the solid words Angela's mother spoke, "I believe there is a song on someone heart." Mother Banks kept her steady beat on the drum as Angela's mother motioned her to stand to her feet. Angela immediately stood up and noticed that all eyes were on her. She hesitated for a moment, closed her eyes and opened her mouth and started singing "I get joy when I think about…" and the congregation answered back "What He done for me." At this point Angela realized that she was singing her personal testimony before her family, the congregation, and God. She was beginning to understand how much Jesus meant in her life for the first time.

After the pastor finished preaching, he opened the doors of the Church for Christian discipleship as he always did. Angela walked to the altar accompanied by her mother. Angela invited Christ into her life that night and felt like she was a part of a special group of people like no other. It was one of the most exhilarating experiences of her life. That faint whisper that had been speaking to her heart was finally becoming

clear. Grace and unconditional love had always been available for her, and she truly understood the meaning of the song, "Oh How I love Jesus."

Angela had a calling by God to ministry at an early age. However, it seemed to be somewhat confusing as to the direction God was leading her. After much discussion with Angela's pastor (at the request of her mother), Angela was convinced at that time that whatever God was calling her to do, it would be against the Church of God in Christ (COGIC) and its founding "tradition" to say that she was called to preach and be a pastor. Therefore, because of the COGIC tradition, the called to preach/pastor would be reshaped and redefined as a call to be an Evangelist. Angela received her license as an Evangelist when she was 16 years old at the Church of God in Christ Convocation in Memphis, Tennessee by orders of Bishop E. B. Hensley. After receiving her license, she spoke at many youth events and was the guest evangelist for numerous youth and young adult services. Whenever she was invited to preach/speak, it was from the floor and not the pulpit. Again, this was a founding southern COGIC tradition that provided a visual reminder to women that their gifts were secondary to men. This would only appease Angela temporarily.

Prince Charming Rusted Armor

Angela was married shortly after high school graduation on March 11, 1978 to Milton [redacted]. He was from Cuthbert, Georgia. Milton met Angela at Mount Carmel Baptist church, in May of 1977 where Angela was the choir director for the Timothy Fleming Young Adult Choir. One night, a special evening program was held and Rev. Milton Thomas, the Associate Pastor of Christ Holiness, USA was the guest

preacher. He "preached like John and prayed like Paul;" and Angela wondered if he was almost too good to be true. Angela was young and inexperienced and the "good Reverend" took her breath away for a moment. After the service was over, she made her way over to him and told him how much the word had encouraged her and was quickly rushed on through the reception line by the mothers of the church. During that time, the mothers were on their toes when it came to how the youth and young adults and how they should conduct themselves. They intervened at all times to make sure the youth were not "tempted or trapped by the devils trickery." In other words, there was to be no "hanky panky" going on, at least not in the church. After their brief encounter, Angela believed that she would never see him again.

When Angela arrived at choir rehearsal two weeks later, she found Rev. Thomas collecting information on her pertaining to her age, address, phone number, and much more. Angela was obviously flattered; however this was the first sign of a very controlling man with no sense of the boundaries of others. At this time in her life, Angela did not have the tools for self care or self value.

Two months after Angela and Milton were married; she started working at Wesley Woods Health Care Center as a Nursing Assistant. This would be Angela's introduction to Methodism. Wesley Woods Health Care Center was owned by the North Georgia Conference of the United Methodist Church. When Angela began working for Wesley Woods, she had no idea that she would be led to be a part of the United Methodist Church 13 years later. Angela truly enjoyed working at the center. The elderly residents and children had a special place in her heart. But because of an unexpected and

difficult pregnancy within weeks of their marriage, her affiliation with the center was short lived.

Angela's first child, Joshua Keith, was born on December 18, 1978. Thirteen months later, her second child, Charity Angela, was born on January 5, 1980. With Angela's expectation of a fairytale life, she discovered her marriage would not be what she had dreamed of. Milton's mother died from cancer when he was 4 years of age and his father died when he was 7, leaving Milton to be raised by a foster care agency and then a host of relatives. The cause of Milton's father's death was a secret. Some family members said that he died in prison. Milton however would never talk to Angela about those rumors.

Milton's upbringing and family values that he learned in the foster care system, did not teach him the concept of sitting at the table with his family for dinner. He would sit in front of the television while Angela and the children ate at the dinner table alone. Because their backgrounds were so different, trying to merge two worlds into one would cause much friction between Milton and Angela. The strong spiritual connection and family customs that Angela had anticipated to be a part of her fairytale life was not available at the [redacted] household. This reality of life was very disturbing and unfulfilling for her.

Milton did not engage in conversation when things agitated him. Instead he reacted by putting his fist through walls. He barked out instructions on how he wanted things done and he expected them to be carried out. However, Angela does not remember many occurrences when Milton would seize an opportunity to explain why a decision

was or was not made. Angela just remembers she and the children were punished when things happen that Milton had not approved.

During the early years of their marriage, Milton never hit Angela or the children. His abuse consisted of tight grips around the arms and wrists and a lot of shoving. Because there were no actual face to face conversations, Angela talked herself in believing that she was not in an abusive relationship. She dismissed the abuse by convincing herself that her husband had issues surrounding anger. After three or four years of marriage, Angela noticed that her son Joshua was very jumpy and somewhat nervous. She also observed her daughter Charity crying whenever her father would come close to her.

Angela was taught that good things happen to good people and bad things happen to bad people. Her life with Milton began to teach her something new and unacceptable, and after almost three years marriage, Angela decided to do something that she had never done before. She now questioned the existing authority figure in her life without being prepared to receive the consequences for speaking out and standing up for herself and her children. Angela found herself by the end of that night with a black eye, a bruise shoulder and a busted lip. This would be the beginning of an unspeakable life of abuse. This was not the life that Angela thought she would have for herself and she was determined not to let her bad choice in a husband effect her or her children longer than necessary.

Because of the continuous abuse, Angela and Milton marriage only lasted a little over six years. They were officially divorced January 12, 1985. Angela was not prepared for the grievous pain she would experience due to a failed marriage. Nor was she

prepared for the isolation she would endure from her father and her church. Angela's father became angry with her for two reasons. According to her father, if she had stayed true to her roots and just did as she was told; Milton would not have been provoked to wrath. In other words, "wives obey your husbands." And if she had taken his strong suggestion to leave out of the back door of the church on her wedding day, she would be safe at home, adhering to her father's instruction and not her husband's demand. Either way, Angela was in a no win situation. But more than anything, it was the rejection and attitude of the church that were devastating to her and much more destructive.

Angela believed that her value and identity were based on the opinions of the members of her church. This belief caused all that she once believed, to be broken and shattered. All that Angela had once known and understood about the nature of the church was clouded by the pain of a failed marriage and the shame of feeling that she had not lived up to the expectations of the COGIC, and her father's admonishment. In fact, members of the church treated her like a leaper and held her responsible for bringing down "a true man of God." Angela turned on herself by becoming her own personal judge and jury, resulting in her not being able to accept grace during this period of her life. Angela was spiritually and emotionally wounded and felt very exposed. She began to believe that it would be best for all if she just left the church; so she did.

In the midst of her pain and delusion, Angela remembers agonizing, trying to ignore her hurt feeling and missing relationships that were not present. Angela found out that she was not perfect and that bad things do happen to good people. However, in the midst of personal discovery and restoration, she realized that the circumstances of life do not supersede the love and grace of Jesus Christ. During a time when she was separated

from the church, she learned that she was never separated from God and that God's grace was available for her, even when she did not receive it from the "church."

Angela discovered during this time that there were always people that kept her connected to the church even when she did not feel worthy. An invitation to sing or a speaking engagement would happen just when she was about to give up, and just like that, her "call" was reaffirmed in her spirit. These gentle nudges from God prevented her heart from developing a condition of callousness. Angela knew that she could not rest until she accepted her true purpose and that was to preach the Word of God, in season and out.

At times, Angela had been told that she kept too much on her plate. Her response was that her plate was filled when she was doing "her thing". Now that she was trying to do God's will, God would and has sustained her through God's Spirit, love, and mercy. She now trusted that God would not give her more than she could bear.

A Change in Venue and a New Attitude

In 2005, Angela had pressed her way toward her calling and purpose of preaching the Word of God, in season and out of season. She was in the final stages of the process toward ordination in the United Methodist Church, and prayerfully, would become an Elder in full connection in June 2006.

Angela left the COGIC in 1983 with no expectation of ever returning to the church. She remained disconnected from any institutional church gathering until 1988 when she accepted the position of Minister of Music at Big Miller Grove Baptist Church.

At Big Miller Grove, Angela's faith was restored in the "church" which began a process toward reconstruction. During her faithful service at Big Miller Grove, Angela experienced the presence and power of women who preached the Word of God with authority and conviction. These experiences gave rise to the strong possibility of her fulfilling her calling; but it also meant that she would have to establish a relationship with a denomination and church structure that embraced women in pastoral ministry.

Women's Day 1992 at Big Miller Grove was a significant day in Angela's spiritual journey. This was the day that Rev. Grace Washington, an ordained United Methodist pastor was the guest preacher. Rev. Washington shared the process of ordination with Angela that led her to completing her B.A. degree at Beulah Heights Bible College in 1998. While at Beulah Heights, she met Rev. Robert White, another United Methodist pastor who later became a trusted friend and mentor. The combination of mentorship and guidance from Rev. Grace Washington and Rev. Robert White gave Angela acceptance and entrance into the North Georgia Conference of the United Methodist Church in 1996.

Angela is proud to be affiliated with the United Methodist Church and considers it an extreme honor to love and pastor God' people. She felt that being responsible, practicing self-control, living with integrity, being celibate in singleness, having social responsibility, and continual growth in the knowledge of God, is her responsibility and obligation as a child of God, as well as a minister of the gospel. The "call" on her life demands that she is accountable for every step she takes, every decision she makes, for what is dwelling in her heart, and for the words she speaks. Angela does not see her "call" to ordained ministry and the process of ordination as a path to obtain a new career,

but a way of life. She believes that as ministers of the gospel, persons should be commit to constant "fruit" inspections. She believes that a pastor's very testimony, be it right or wrong, can determine life or death for someone's soul. Therefore, pastors should be forever conscience of how they reflect Christ.

The scripture relates that "many are called, but few are chosen." Therefore, she understands the necessity of complete dedication to a higher form of godliness. The text that gives her the best guidance is found in the book of Titus 1: 7-8. Here, Paul gives advice to Titus pertaining to his responsibilities as the leader in the churches on the island of Crete, "Since an overseer is entrusted with God's work, he (she) must be blameless, not overbearing, not quick tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. Rather he (she) should be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined" (NIV).

If one looks closely, one will notice that most of the qualifications listed in the book of Titus involve character, rather than knowledge or skill. A minister's life-style and relationships provide a window into her or his character. Ministers should always be in constant pursuit, with urgency, to know and imitate the character of God. Angela believes that it is important for her parishioners to have a pastor who effectively preaches God's Word. However, it is vitally important that she live out God's Word and to provide an example for others to follow. She firmly believes that parishioners must see Jesus in those called to lead as pastors. Growing in God's Word and knowledge is her duty as a child of God and as a pastor.

Experience, Experience, Experience

Reflecting briefly on just three of her pastoral appointments, Angela has decided to share areas of common pain and disappointment as well as times of joy and jubilation. She hopes that what one sees is that being saved, sanctified, and unapologetically faithful, is the difference that makes the journey of faith all worthwhile. She admits that ministry as she now knows it, is not a fairytale to be cherished, but a life of experiences to build upon. In this section Angela shares how her journey of faith and maturity in Christ has lead to a deeper determination to serve God in spirit and in truth. While she does not see her personal life and her life in ministry separate, she has chosen to share her reflections of her ministry in a concise and cohesive manner.

Alexander Chapel UMC was one of those bittersweet appointments to say the least. From the moment she arrived as pastor, she set a precedent that caused the "jaws of hell" to open up and try to break her spirit. Alexander Chapel was one of those traditional African American congregations whose time had come and gone. The congregation was as antiquated as they come. The congregation was resistant to change and they were too proud to allow a female pastor to assist them in their much-needed reconstruction. And so the deconstruction of Alexander Chapel began two years after her arrival. When it began, it came as swift and unexpected as an undercurrent wave. Before the members had a chance to catch their breath and gain their composure, they were enjoying the realization of "God moving in mysterious ways."

Some of the more memorable challenges to change and transformation that Angela experienced were from the female members refusing to follow leadership and direction from a female pastor. There was mistrust from female members around issues

of aesthetics and perceived style and status. These initial issues caused a reduction in membership, a decline in morale, financial shortages and a reduction of attendance. For Angela, the challenge was either to be authentic to self and her call to the ministry or to allow her congregation to define her role based on their historical traditional norms.

Angela's practice of dressing with distinction and elegance was a standard in the COGIC. At Alexander Chapel UMC, contextually speaking, dressing with distinction was more of a threat than an affirmation. Angela quickly realized that she was called to be more than just a spiritual leader; she was also called to realign the congregation toward a more progressive outlook of self and self-worth. She realized that the context of Alexander Chapel was typical of many rural congregations.

Therefore, she had to make adjustments based on her new context in order for communal acceptance to take place where members were empowered to change voluntarily. Ironically and paradoxically speaking, another major challenge for Angela at Alexander Chapel was in making her final departure after years of reaching, teaching and sending forth excited and experienced members to make disciples for Jesus Christ. The congregation moved from being a meager part time appointment to a vital congregation that met the relevant needs of its community. Alexander Chapel was well on its way to becoming a full time church with full time ministry opportunities. Upon her arrival, she felt she was sharply rejected without cause, and by the time of her departure, she practically was chained to the church. The experience for Angela taught her much about how to overcome unwarranted mistreatment by being persistence, authentic and loving in the mist of people not aware of their own potential and power in Christ.

When her appointment at Alexander Chapel came to an end on June 29 2003, Angela will never forget that day. She recalls giving the benediction at 1:00 P. M. but not leaving the church parking lot until well after 6:00 P.M. There were both feelings of joy and sorrow Angela was experiencing. She was feeling the joy of success was overshadowed by the pain of separation; separation from the congregation whom she now loved and who now genuinely and unconditionally loved her. And as she drove down Main Street moving onto I-75, she saw what some may have though looked like a funeral procession, as her former congregation escorted her out of town.

Her journey continued to Kansas City, Kansas and Trinity United Methodist Church (UMC), a church located in the heart of the inner city. It was July 1, 2003 and the question lingering in Angela's mind was, "how do you voluntarily leave home and go to the unknown?" It was not long before Angela found out that the unknown had become her wilderness and she had become John the Baptist. (How was this that different from Alexander Chapel?)

There was the initial excitement of behalf of the members of Trinity UMC, a predominately White congregation, with the appointment of an African-American woman pastor who was dynamic, charismatic, and passionate about serving God. They were excited because as a congregation, they were positioned in the midst of a changing community where white-flight was nearing the end of its exodus from downtown to the outlying areas of Kansas City. The congregation had determined that in order for them to remain alive, it had to emulate the cultural identity of the community. Angela was appointed to become the catalyst for Trinity's change from a predominately all white congregation to a multi-ethnic congregation worshipping God under one roof.

The excitement was short lived however as the realization of what happens when you put a dynamic, charismatic, and passionate Black woman in charge of a white congregation. The problematic issues emerged when a contingent group of the members were confronted with changing their views of who can and who cannot lead them. Tension, lack of trust and misbehavior were all present in the life of the church. Angela tried desperately to remain faithful as she recalled her earlier experiences with Alexander Chapel. However, Alexander Chapel was an African American congregation who were actively accepting of other ethnic groups.

Trinity UMC was a congregation who at one time was very affluent and wealthy. It prided itself in the long list of white male pastors who entered their pulpit with notoriety and distinction. And now, in the midst of white-flight, by invitation, a Black woman had the audacity to accept the position as pastor of evangelism in this predominately white congregation. Immediately, Angela was confronted with the unwavering conviction of some members and their racial epithets such as "gal," "colored," "sassy" and "you people." The most memorable and unforgettable was the "racially blind" compliment from a white male member of the church happened after Angela sang a Negro Spiritual during Black History Month. He said, "You sang so good I could picture you picking cotton."

Things got progressively worst, especially when the white male senior pastor began to feel threatened by the pin point accuracy and fluidity of Angela's discernment and multicultural vision for the congregation. Over time, Angela's spiritual power and conviction won the admiration and trust of many members of the church. Worship attendance began to increase in record numbers. As a new addition to ministry, she began

a bible study that was supported by the congregation and attended by the both the congregation and the community. She also created many other innovative opportunities to model multiculturalism that were embraced and celebrated by both the congregation and the community. Through all of this, Angela continued to be plagued with racial issues while receiving virtually no visible support from the senior pastor.

The defining moment in Angela's tenure at Trinity came when a racially motivated hate crime was committed on the lawn of the church. The incident occurred when a 5 x 11ft. banner containing the bust of both pastors was altered. Angela's head was "cut out" of the banner leaving a gaping hole in the sign. The incident was not reported to the police nor was the incident reported to Angela. It was not until 6 weeks later when the picture was needed that Angela was informed of the racially motivated event. When she found out, she immediately became tremendously frightened and feared for her life.

A series of meetings and dialogues ensued in the months that followed. Again, Angela found herself in a position of exploitation and ill-treatment by the very system that she was taught to rely on. She asked of herself, "where do you turn and who can you trust when the people of God are unrecognizable." Angela felt she was in Kansas City, Kansas; seemingly alone, and without support. But just like her experience at Jones Avenue COGIC, God somehow provided for her a "rag-tag" support group consisting of some of the most unlikely people she would consciously pursue in relationship. Again, the paradox and what she felt was God's sense of humor; the group consisted of ministers from various churches. There was a legally blind male pastor who had issues women in ministry and authority, a Black female minister who had issues with men in authority,

and had a lack of inclusive language in Biblical references and lastly, a Black male minister living by open confession an alternative life-style. This rag-tag group assembled only by God became Angela's "angels" and family all in one. To this day, they love her unconditionally and she likewise. Without them, there was virtually no way that Angela could have survived her transition out of Trinity to her new appointment.

In retrospect, the inverted fairytale journey continues to speak to Angela in profound and life-changing ways. She has begun to realize that the fairytale is not about the dreams we dream but the audacity live out our dreams as part of reconstructing our lives. She affirms that when you dare to deconstruct ill-will and misapplied behavior, you meet God doing God's finest work; transforming lives beginning with "self."

The discovery of "self" and the willingness to see "self" as "self" really is, has allowed Angela to move from victim, to more than a survivor. She is now able to manage "trauma reenactment" and use it as a asset and not a liability. She can appropriately assess conditions based on the immediate situation and not based on prior misinformation and limitations. Angela is now ready to move on, better equipped to pastor a waiting congregation.

The summer of July 2005 brought with it good weather and great expectations. For well over 2 years, Angela had been away from the Black church experience. She fondly remembers those hot and sweltering night worship services as part of the COGIC. She longed for call and response sermons where members are free to passionately express God's presence in their lives and she couldn't wait to use her gift of singing spontaneous songs as the spirit moved through the congregation. Yes, for Angela, there is nothing like

church generally and the Black church specifically. For her, a good shout of "Amen" is like water for the thirsty soul in the desert; she had to have it.

As Angela made her way to Asbury Mount Olive United Methodist Church (AMO) on July 3, 2005, she came to an appointment that she felt was a match made in heaven. After the benediction preceding her inaugural sermon, the folk were wild with excitement. They were dancing in the isles, shouting in corners and praising God all over the sanctuary. Both pastor and people had been in a valley of wilderness and had received an answer to their prayers.

With swift and deliberate quickness, the deconstruction and reconstruction of AMO had begun. However, just like in previous appointments, opposition was present. Angela's experience over the last nine years in the UMC served her well. She anticipated much of her early male opposition and had a tried and proven methodology to minimize its effect on her ministry. With urgency, Angela assessed the situation of the congregation by utilizing her expertise in community organizing and congregational development to address the congregational needs that confronted them. She was able to galvanize cooperation from longstanding members and pillars of the congregation without compromising her ability to be a credible leader.

Once the existing leadership of the congregation was able to see, question and embrace a doctrine of "dynamic direction," the deconstruction was underway. Today, the congregation is actively involved and anxiously awaiting the unveiling plan of reconstruction. Much ground work has already been done based on years of soul searching, continuing ministry education and on the job experience. Trust in Angela as the pastor and leader of AMO is at an all-time high.

Under Angela's leadership, AMO has already successfully moved from part time to becoming a full time congregation with full pastoral benefits. The church has grown in membership attendance, financial giving, and ministry opportunities. The church is also in the process of visioning for a new Christian education center. Some would say that the pace is too fast for the congregation, but Angela's response continues to be "With faith, all things are possible." "I'm not pushing the congregation, God is leading it." She is determined to see AMO as an inverted fairytale from the beginning. She wonders what will become of the congregation when it's her time to say farewell.

CHAPTER TWO

THE STATE OF THE ART IN THIS MINISTRY PROJECT

This chapter will look at some writings of those who have written on the subject of church growth with an emphasis on evangelism and discipleship. The works cited here are not exhaustive; they represent some of the wealth of information that has been written on the subject. The topic of church growth covers a wide spectrum and the information presented in this section attempts to present the thoughts of some theologians and other writers who have addressed the subject.

As the author looks at her particular context, the area called Central Topeka, it is clear, based on the historical record that this area is in desperate need of coming together as "community" for the purpose of survival and sustainability. This once thriving area of the city is undergoing tremendous changes in diversity and cultural identity and therefore, the search for common ground is necessary. The author has strong convictions that in order for the community of Central Topeka to remain vital, a period of deconstruction that leads to reconstruction must take place.

To begin with, the bible is not silent on the subject of church growth and congregational development through evangelism and discipleship. Church growth and congregational development through evangelism and discipleship is not only important in the sacred canon, it is also a critical topic in theological circles. It is the author's experience and based on a review of the biblical and theological literature that

congregational development and church growth is becoming one of the fastest growing ideals of the 21st century.

Suffice it to say, from Genesis to Revelation the theme is the same—"God's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." (Jn. 6:40)

There are many ideas about the meaning of evangelism. To some, evangelism is what Joel Olstein, Joyce Meyers, T.D. Jakes, Juanita Bynum, Creflo Dollar, and other televangelist do and what their pastor's do not do. To others, evangelism is firing a stream of Bible verses at prospective converts. To still others, anything one does as a Christian is evangelism.

The Bible does not give a quick answer when we search for a definition of evangelism. The word *evangelism* in fact is not in the Bible, but the words *evangelist* and *evangelize* are there, and from these we learn what evangelism is. The Greek word *euaggelizo* means "to preach, to proclaim the good tidings, to tell the good news."[1] Evangelism in the Bible, then, was a ministry of the spoken word. Evangelism means "to make known the message of the gospel."[2]

Evangelism is not the mere testimony of a good, consistent life. The quiet, pervasive influence of the Christian life is necessary, but it is not evangelism. Being friendly, helpful, and neighborly may be a necessary preparation for evangelism, but it is no substitute for evangelism. Christianity cannot be radiated; truths about God and God's

[1] Paul M. Robinson, *Call the Witnesses* (Elgin Illinois: The Brethren Press, 1974).

[2] Ibid.

son have to be communicated. Good deeds do not convey the actual content of the gospel; the good news must be expressed in words. Evangelism, then, is the specific, articulated presentation of the message that Christ's death upon the cross turns away God's wrath which abides upon humanity in its unregenerate state (Romans 3:25; John 3:36). Evangelism is the presenting of Jesus Christ, so that people will accept Him as their Savior from the guilt and power of sin, and declare Him Lord as they seek to follow Him in their daily lives.

Christians are motivated to share the Good News primarily because our Lord commands us to evangelize. The heart of the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20 is "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations." The command in Acts 1:8 is "Ye shall be witnesses unto me." At the Berlin Congress on Evangelism, John R. W. Stott said: "We engage in evangelism, not necessarily because we want to, or because we choose to, or because we like to; but because we have been told to. The church is under orders. The risen Lord has commanded us to go, to preach, and to make disciples, and that is enough for us."[3]

We are motivated to evangelize also because people are lost (Luke 19:10), without hope (Ephesians 2:12), under condemnation (John 3:36), and destined for destruction (Mark 16:16). For some, nobody is lost in the eternal sense; nobody is really

[3] Ibid.

perishing; nobody is destined to spend eternity in Hell. This is a new form of an old universalism, but Jesus taught eternal punishment as well as eternal life (Matthew 25:46).[4]

In the area of evangelism, Roger K. Swanson and Shirley F. Clement offer local congregations a strategy for doing evangelism that is biblical, contemporary, and theologically grounded in historic evangelism in *The Faith-Sharing Congregation Developing a Strategy for the Congregation as Evangelist.*[5] Lee N. June and Matthew Parker edited *Evangelism and Discipleship in African-American Churches,* gives insight on winning and building disciples for Jesus Christ in the black community.[6] Carlyle Fielding Stewart, III talks about three principles for prophetic evangelism in *African American Church Growth: 12 Principles for Prophetic Ministry.*[7] They are proclamation, propagation/communication, and participation. The Rev. James O. Stallings traces the founding and growth of three African American denominations stemming from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in *Telling the Story.*[8] It highlights social, political, cultural, and religious influences through which the black churches of America emerged as separate and independent entities.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Roger K. Swanson, and Shirley F. Clement, *The Faith Sharing Congregation: Developing a Strategy for the Congregation As Evangelist* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1997).

[6] Lee N. June, and Matthew Parker ed., (*Evangelism and Discipleship in African-American Churches* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1999).

[7] Carlyle Fielding Stewart, III *African American Church Growth: 12 Principles for Prophetic Ministry* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994).

[8] James O. Stallings, *Telling the Story* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1988).

By definition, evangelism is different from discipleship. Discipleship is based on a follower, who accepts and assists in spreading the doctrines of another. A Christian disciple is a person who accepts and assists in the spreading of the good news of Jesus Christ. Discipleship is a process which enables a person to grow in the Lord Jesus Christ and equips them to overcome joyfully the pressures and trials of this present life. This process requires believers to constantly examine their thoughts, words and actions in accordance with the Word of God. We should always be ready to give testimony for the hope that is within us (1 Peter 3:15) and disciple others to walk in His way.

In his book, *Death of the Church,* Mike Regele says that we believe that the invisible church of Jesus Christ exist outside of and independent from culture. However, the visible church, which manifests itself in every era and place as a social institution, reflects the social norms and beliefs of its host culture. He says that in awakenings, the religious community turns its focus toward "matters of the heart" and one's spiritual relationship with God. Regele makes a strong argument regarding the church being the body of Christ and not the building. He believes that buildings are not a prerequisite for being the church and that this was the teaching and thinking of the Old Testament that had been superseded by the New Covenant. Regele insists that the emphasis should be on the heart, not external structures of brick and mortar.[9] This statement is an important foundation for the support of community based ministry in the face of exclusive church clubs where members are not welcoming of and interested in the concerns of the larger community around it.

[9] Mike Regele, *Death of the Church* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 38.

The literature review makes a compelling argument that communities today are in need of deconstruction. Isolation, separation, elitism and classism have become the hallmark attributes of churches that anchor our communities. Getting congregations and pastors to work together toward the common good of the entire community is a very daunting task.

At one point, it was thought that community organizing was the "one size fits all" approach to solving this long and systemic problem. However, it was evident based on the overall condition of the community that although organizers were successful in getting pastors and community leaders together, self-interest continued to be the prevailing attitude.

We have discovered that church growth is attainable when the congregation makes a real effort to get involved in community issues and create ministries that meet community need. The Christian community cannot sit idly by and allow the pre-churched to continue to be victims of social systems that self-perpetuate their own self-interest. Therefore, we must be willing to explore new ways of sustaining the church by causing Christian persons to take a more active and vested role in the life of the church and the life of the community.

In his book *The Empowerment Church: Speaking a New Language for Church Growth,* Carlyle Fielding Stewart III says, "Obstacles to church empowerment and spiritual growth range from the seven last words, we never did it that way before, to the inability to adapt to change…The church, believe it or not, needs to be converted to

Christ…Being religious does not mean we are spiritual…Going to church does not mean that we are saved; that we are living in a saving relationship with Christ."[10]

Stewart goes on to say that "The church needs a re-conversion experience…Churches need to be reconverted from old habits that die hard and behaviors that derail the Holy Spirit's presence and power to convert, save and change lives.[11] Hence, a model of deconstruction that leads to reconstruction of the church and the community.

[10] Carlyle Fielding Stewart III, *The Empowerment Church: Speaking a New Language for Church Growth* (Nashville: Abingdon Press 2001), 38.

[11] Ibid., 39.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

In an effort to address a pressing issue in many local congregations today, which is the ongoing and rapid decline of congregational life that gives way to a lack of vitality and sustainability, this author looked at the topic from four foundational areas: theoretical, biblical, historical, and theological. The author has gleaned from the Biblical scriptures that speak to the subject as well as the thoughts of several theologians, writers and preachers. Some information was taken from published material from a local congregation, which is the context from which the author serves. Also, the author used thoughts of her United Theological Seminary mentors, Dr. Felix D. Burrows, Sr. and Dr. Kent L. Poindexter.

This work is not exhaustive; however, it gives the reader some perspective and insight into the problem. In conducting the research, the author found that the subject of church growth can be addressed from numerous venues. Furthermore, this paper does not attempt to solve the problem; it presents thought and reflections on the subject. Its purpose is to present substance based on some research into the area. It seeks to affirm existing models of congregational development and church growth that have worked to some degree in the past and seeks to establish the basis of a new model that works in the author's context of ministry, Asbury Mount Olive United Methodist Church.

Theoretical Foundations

The quest for common ground and sustainability is an integral part of the life of any community. This is especially true for the author who lived much of her life in a rather large inner city, among the hustle and bustle, political machines, traffic jams, corporate giants and the ever present awareness of those who are considered indigent and homeless. Today, while living is a much smaller inner city context, she still experiences the same mores and nuances that make life in the inner city challenging. This significant transition for the author has been both a learning experience and the context out of which she is in servant leadership.

The author is the pastor of an inner-city African-American church located just blocks away from the Kansas state capital and Washburn University, an elite university that produces some of the greatest minds in the state of Kansas and the country. None-the-less, within her geographic area there are visible signs of blight, economic depravity, crime and vandalism. The author finds that she must create community and find common ground in order to be successful in ministry, but also to connect the church with the needs of the people who live in the neighborhood. She sees this happening at multiple levels which include but are not limited to the revitalization of the congregation, partnerships with community residents, local and state government, social service agencies and law enforcement agencies and officials. The author feels that this coming together creating community will happen in multiple ways utilizing multiple rhythms over a multi-year period of time.

Howard Thurman understood the need for community and the need for people of all ethnic and economic levels to be reconciled together. His understanding of community

was clearly defined when he wrote, "I want to be more loving in my heart…Keep open the door of thy heart; it matters not how many doors are closed against thee."[1]

These words were written after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. when blacks, whites, rich and poor found themselves finding reasons to never consider reconciliation and unity as a people.

> Howard Thurman understood the need of all living beings to proclaim the uniqueness of their own experience. He understood their need to building protective walls around their community until they can feel secure in their identity. But, he warned, "Community cannot feed for long on itself, it can only flourish where always the boundaries are giving way to the coming of others from beyond them." We belong to each other, he said, and if we shut ourselves away we diminish ourselves.[2]

According to Thurman, it becomes critical to our survival as a people to find common ground and live together in harmony with each other. It is with this understanding that the author comes to this area of study. Congregational Development and church administration in an urban setting is a very critical need in our communities today. The more we prosper, it seems the more we seek ways to divide and alienate ourselves from one another. In the city of Topeka, there is grave concern over what to do about the mass exodus of whites and African Americans from the urban core. It seems that these groups are moving outward toward suburban areas leaving behind buildings and communities that are being populated by Asians, Hispanics and Native Americans.

In his book *City of God, City of Satan*, Robert Linthicum identifies and provides a biblical mandate for a biblical urban theology. He gives the reader tools for reclaiming

[1] Howard Thurman, *The Search for Common Ground: An Inquiry into the Basis of Man's Experiences of Community* (Richmond, Indiana: Friends United Press, 1986), xi.

[2] Ibid., xi.

the urban inner city by using biblical passages as the framework for empowering the people toward transformation.

In his opening chapter, Linthicum quotes Rafael Salas, the late executive director of the United Nations Fund for Population Activities when he said:

> In about 19 years, the world will undergo a momentous change: for the first time in recorded history, a majority of the world's people will live in cities primarily in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. These cities will be of enormous size and will be plagued by unemployment, overcrowding and disease where services such as power, water sanitation or refuse disposal will be strained to the breaking point.[3]

This particular quote, while not specifically referencing the situation in the United States, does give an indication of the serious nature of the potential hazards regarding the growth in the inner city.

It is therefore, the author's belief that the church must stand firm and equip itself to meet the new demands of the inner city. George Hunter III wrote in his book *Church for the Unchurched,* a list of ten widely used goals that traditional churches often have in mind for people. Hunter says churches want people to be religious, believe like them, behave like them, have an experience like them, become like them, share their politics, support their institutional church, prepare people for heaven and have explicit sacramental goals.[4]

In sharp contrast to the view of Hunter, James H. Cone, in his book *My Soul Looks Back*, admonishes the church, especially the black church to become more aware

[3] Robert Linthicum, *City of God, City of Satan: A Biblical Theology of the Urban Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 17.

[4] George H. Hunter III, *Church for the Unchurched* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 41.

of the needs of the people and the importance of liberation. Cone says that like white churches, black churches that ignore the need for liberation of poor people as the central message were not the people of God but rather agents of the Anti-Christ.[5]

Cone goes on to suggest that any denomination, white or black that defines its goals based on the self-interest of church leadership or any other human factor could not be the church of the risen Christ.[6]

According to the author, if the church is to meet the demands of the inner city and also be faithful to the biblical mandate of making disciples of all people, it must begin by teaching the congregation how to be faithful to scripture. She says, "The church can no longer afford the luxury of living in isolation, implementing programs that only serve our interest and ignore the needs of those around us." In order for the church to build community and meet the needs of those around it, there must be intentional discipleship, evangelism, stewardship and Christian education that lead to spiritual, missional, financial, numerical and programmatic church growth.

Central to the conversation is the emergence of the mega church and the seeker sensitive or seeker friendly methods of church growth. A popular and leading figure in the church growth movement in the twentieth century was Donald McGarvan. McGarvan was founder of the Fuller Institute of Church Growth and an author of the decisive work on church growth and the church growth movement, "Understanding Church Growth." McGarvan's work was performed on the campus of Fuller Theological Seminary. Following the teachings of McGarvan was C. Peter Wagner who took

[5] James H. Cone, *My Soul Looks Back* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1995), 66.

[6] Ibid.

legendary courses at Fuller Seminary on the whole subject of church growth. Another important contemporary writer in the formation of the church growth system would be Robert Schuler as we move closer to our modern times. Robert Schuler is the pastor emeritus of the Crystal Cathedral Church in Garden Grove, California. He is famous for his positive thinking as influenced by Norman Vincent Peale. Norman Vincent Peale's writings were influenced by Fosdick before him; a liberal who believed in the social gospel.[7]

Robert Schuler began his ministry literally as a drive-in church where people could drive up and not have to get out of their cars to receive the message. He began his church in Garden Grove, California with a survey of the community. Schuler conducted his survey to find out from the unbelievers in the community "What would they like to see in a church? What is preventing them from coming to church? What can we do, or how can we build this church so that you will come."

Greatly influenced by Robert Schuler was Bill Hybel. In Chicago around 1972, Bill Hybel launched a ministry to high school students called "Son Life." As the group began to grow, the students complained that there were several hindrances to them bringing their friends. Some of these hindrances were the meeting environment, the music, and the teaching. As a result of these complaints and as a result of his working with the youth in the Son Life ministry, he started 'Son City' in 1973. Son City began as an outreach program to unbelieving youth. Over time, the message, music, environment, and teaching were all adapted to the audience, and his following was filled with unbelievers which ultimately became the Willow Creek Community Church.

[7] Ibid.

In essence, Willow Creek Community Church was a youth ministry that developed into a wildly successful church depending upon how one defines success. If one defines success by large numbers, it is a tremendously successful church. Statistics show that something like twenty thousand people attend on any given Sunday at Willow Creek Community Church. In 1975, just two years after he began Son City, Hybel linked with Robert Schuler's leadership conference and their ministries have been working together ever since.[8]

The Mecca for the church growth movement in the late seventies, the eighties and the early nineties, was Rick Warren and Saddleback Community Church. Saddleback is a Southern Baptist church located in Southern California. Rick Warren's picture appears on the covers of many of the Christian periodicals or publications in recent years. *Christianity Today Magazine,* designated Rick Warren as potentially the most influential pastor in America because of his massive influence on modern Christianity. Rick Warren followed Schuler's mode when started his church, Saddleback, also used a survey of the community, and did a demographic study to find out what it would take for these unbelievers in the community to come to church.

Both Bill Hybel and Rick Warren wrote best seller books. "Becoming a Contagious Christian" was a book that predated "The Purpose Driven Church," which has probably become the most influential book in Christianity on the subject of the Church Growth Movement. Shortly after the release of "The Purpose Driven Church," Warren wrote, "The Purpose Driven Life" which is also included among the best selling books in America.

[8] Ibid.

The hypothesis of the author is that if churches submitted to the biblical mandate of discipleship and evangelism and implement a congregational growth and development model of deconstruction that leads to reconstruction, an "Ideal Church" can emerge to sustain both congregation and community. For this project, the author is going to take a radical approach to church growth based on the notion of Reggie McNeal. In his book, *The Present Future, Six Tough Questions for the Church,* McNeal says that "the current trend toward church growth is on methodology – how to catch people's attention, sign'em up, keep'em busy, and get'em to contribute money, talent, and energy to church efforts." He goes on to say "That several decades of the church growth movement's emphasis on methodologies have conditioned church leaders to look for the next program, the latest "model," the latest fad in ministry programming to help "grow" the church…The focus of the church is on itself, on what it takes to succeed."[9]

In order for growth to occur in the church and community, McNeal espouses an emphasis on outreach. He says Churches that understand the realities of the present future are shifting the target of ministry efforts from church activities to community transformation. He goes on to say that the problem with most churches is that what they practice won't fare too well outside because they are selling membership packages. McNeal believes that if churches are to grow and become sustainable forces in the community, it has to stop trying to get people to get what we have and begin offering what they need. They need what they always need: God in their lives.[10]

[9] Reggie McNeal, *The Present Future: Six Tough Questions for the Church* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 26.

[10] Ibid., 26-27.

This author will attempt to show that by using congregational growth techniques, intentional bible based teaching and preaching regarding discipleship and evangelism, congregations can move from local church self-interest to a more inclusive community based model where common ground and sustainability can be attained.

We will now see how the historical, biblical, and theological foundations are used to shape and support this process.

Biblical Foundations

There is no doubt that God wants God's Word to spread around the world so that everyone may come to faith in God through Jesus Christ and have everlasting life. Matthew 28 verses 18 - 20, fittingly has been called The Great Commission and the marching orders for the Church. "Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age."[11]

There are many passages in both the Old and New Testaments which speak of God's saving will. "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (Gen.22:18). "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands: Sing forth the honor of God's name: make his praise glorious. All the earth shall worship Thee, and shall sing unto Thee; they shall sing to Thy name" (Ps. 66:1, 2, 4). "God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause God's face to shine upon us; that Thy way may be known upon the earth, Thy

[11] Mt 28:18-20 NIV (New International Version).

saving health among all nations. Let the people praise Thee, O God; let all the people praise thee. O let the nations be glad and sing for joy: for Thou shall judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth" (PS.67:1-4). "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands" (Ps. 100:1). "Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters …Give ear and come to me; hear me that your soul may live. I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my unfailing kindness promised to David" (Is. 55:1, 3).[12]

"Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation" (Mk. 16:15). "Then the master told his servant, 'Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in, so that my house will be full'" (Lk. 14:23). "Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God. Through Jesus and for his names' sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith" (Rom.1:1, 5). God our Savior "wants all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Tim.2:4). "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God's elect…who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ…" (1 Pet.1:1, 2). "Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near" (Rev.1:3).[13]

[12] David A. Witte, "A Review Of The Great Commission With Special Emphasis On The Active Greek Verbs That Indicate A Speaking Of The Gospel Message" (WELS Evangelism Convocation, Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1975), 179.

[13] Ibid.

To go on citing passages would prove little. Suffice it to say, from Genesis to Revelation the theme is the same—"God's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day" (Jn.6:40).

There is an estrangement between man and God which needs reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:19). Jesus says that it is sin that defiles us and cuts us off from God (Mark 7:14-23; Isaiah 59:12). Something happened in the Garden of Eden that blighted the entire human race (Romans 5:12). As a result, the whole human family is spiritually dead (Ephesians 2: l) and is under the grip of sin (Galatians 3:22). Therefore people need to be shown the depth of their depravity and the extent to which they have fallen short of the expectation of God.[14]

By definition evangelism is different from discipleship. Discipleship is a follower, one who accepts and assists in spreading the doctrines of another. A Christian disciple is a person who accepts and assists in the spreading of the good news of Jesus Christ. Discipleship is a process which enables a person to grow in the Lord Jesus Christ and equips them to overcome joyfully the pressures and trials of this present life. This process requires believers to constantly examine their thoughts, words and actions in accordance with the Word of God. We should always be ready to give testimony for the hope that is within us (1 Peter 3:15) and disciple others to walk in His way.

According to the Gospels as contained in the New Testament, being a Christian discipleship involves personal growth characterized in five ways. First by Putting Jesus first in all things (Mark 8:34-38). This requires a change in their lives and choices that may be difficult at times. Christians need and should be set apart from the world. Their

[14] Ibid.

focus should be on the Lord and pleasing Him in every area of their life. They must put off self-centeredness and put on Christ-centeredness.

John 8:31-32 says that people become Disciples of Christ by following Jesus' teachings. People must be obedient followers and doers of the Word. Obedience is the supreme test of faith in God (1 Samuel 28:18) and Jesus is the perfect example of obedience as he lived a life on earth of complete obedience to God even to the point of death (Philippians 3:6-8).

John 13:34-35 says that people become Disciples of Christ by their love for other disciples. People are told that the love of other believers is the evidence of their being a member of God's family (1 John 3:10). Love is defined and elaborated on in 1 Corinthians 13:1-13. In examining these verses, it is clear that love is not an emotion; it is action. People must be doing something and involved in the process. Furthermore, people are told to think more highly of others than themselves and to look out for their interests (Philippians 2:3, 4). However, verse 5 really sums up what we are to do when it comes to everything — "our attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus."

John 15:5-8 says people become Christians by bearing good fruit. The job of Christians is not to produce fruit but rather to abide in Christ and the Holy Spirit produces the fruit, this fruit is the result of our obedience. As people become more obedient to the Lord and learn to walk in His ways, their lives will change. The biggest change will take place in their hearts, and the overflow of their obedience will be new thoughts, words and actions that are representative of these changes.

And finally we become disciple of Christ when we make disciples of others as mandated by the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20). We are to share our faith and

tell nonbelievers about the wonderful changes Jesus Christ has made in our lives. No matter what our maturity level is in Christ, we have something to offer. Too often, we believe the lie from Satan that we do not really know enough or have not been a Christian long enough to make a difference. Not true! Some of the most enthusiastic representatives of the Christian life are new believers who have just discovered the awesome love of God for themselves. They may not know a lot of bible verses or the "accepted" way of saying things, but they have experienced the love of the living God of this world.

Overall, the author believes that the overwhelming attention given to the area of church growth and congregational development through evangelism, discipleship and related topics increased its importance in the bible. It is also the author's opinion that while the topic of church growth and congregational development is an important biblical truth, it is not necessarily embraced as an important aspect of our Christian experience.

The author believes that the biblical study of church growth and congregational development is uncomfortable when its aim is simply to find a few texts that will keep members coming to support the local church one more year.

As our culture becomes more cynical and mistrusting, such a study in the proper context becomes a matter of life and death for churches. It is the author's intent to educate an uninformed and misinformed people to have the courage to listen to the Holy Spirit and to the whole of God's word. When they listen, the Holy Spirit will deconstruct their perceptions and behaviors and reconstruct their resolve to go into all the world and make disciples for Jesus Christ. From this encounter, the Ideal Church will emerge, not as

a building, but as a people who take the transformative message of Jesus to improve the quality of life for all people.

Historical Foundations

To provide historical foundations for this project, the author will attempt to uncover some of the underlying meanings that surround the African American family and the African American Church. One of the fundamental assumptions about the African American family and the African American church is that they are closely related.

The historical foundations we are about to explore will provide meaning and definition to how the black family and church who were so closely related has drifted apart. This drifting apart as we shall see has come from several sources. Ultimately, the values that were held so dear have become devoid of meaning. The author believes that the biblical mandate of discipleship and evangelism will assist the black family and church to reunite and strengthen the ties that once held them so tightly together.

We will look at family structure, extended families and the thread that weaves the tapestry that keeps the African American community together amid slavery, racism, sexism, classism and other forms of oppression. The terms "black" and "African American" can and will be used interchangeable throughout this discussion.

A significant factor that creates a commonality and synergy with the black church and the black family is that they have the same roots and similar expressions. According

to Wallace Smith, author of *The Church in the Life of the Black Family,* Dr. J. Deotis Roberts says:

> We have studied the history and sociology of the black family and have allowed our doctrine of the church in the black tradition to emerge out of that context. The extended family has been employed as a way of imagining the black church. Since our goal has been to make these two primary black institutions mutually supportive, it has been proper to use the family image in reference to a black ecclesiology...Since black families are the source of the black church's life and growth, the measure of its ministry to black families will determine the quality of its own mission.[15]

Smith contends that throughout history, the black family has struggled with an assortment of problems. Families have felt sever pain as they have been accused or convicted of drug addictions, prostitution, gang violence, rape and murder. They have been the victims of homelessness, illness, loneliness, child abuse, neglect and economic deprivation. In many of these situations, it seems that the family has had no place to go where they will feel accepted. He says that in a world that seems programmed to say "no," the church seems to always open its doors and arms and says "yes." For black people, the church has been the one place where they have been able to experience unconditional positive regard.[16]

Smith goes on to say that it is no accident that families that participate in the life of the church experience far less problems than those who remain pre-churched. One of the reasons Smith makes this assertion is based on the hope that is experienced through song, sermons and general fellowship. He says that it is in this ethos, that families gain

[15] Wallace Charles Smith, *The Church in the Life of the Black Family* (Valley Forge: Judson Pres, 1985), 13.

[16] Ibid., 14.

strength and are taught how to love, respect and care for other persons who are members of the church.[17]

The eschatological experiences of hope that is constantly reinforced coupled with the testimonies of those who have "made it over" serve to sustain a people who would have otherwise broken under the yoke of relentless oppression.

As we dialogue about the black or African American family, it becomes necessary to define terms. The author agrees with the writer of *Climbing Jacobs Ladder*, Andrew Billingsley's definition of the African American family. Essentially it is an intimate association of persons of African descent who are related to one another by a variety of means, including blood, marriage, formal adoption, informal adoption or by appropriation; who are sustained by a history of common residence in America; and are deeply embedded in a network of social structures both integral to and external to itself. Numerous interlocking elements come together forming an extraordinary resilient institution.[18]

As we go deeper into the ethos and history of the black family, we can begin to see that "family has a broad meaning with roots that run deep showing strength and stability. However, the understanding of family held by African Americans is quite different from that held by the dominate culture.

According to Billingsley, the hundred-year period between the end of slavery and the aftermath of World War II, the structure of the African American family was

[17] Ibid., 14.

[18] Andrew Billingsley, Climbing *Jacob's Ladder: The Enduring Legacy of African-American Families* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), 28.

extremely stable. During this period, core families consisted of father, mother and biological children. Divorce was rare and couples usually remained married until death. Children usually remained in the homes with their parents until they were ready to start families of their own.[19]

A very disturbing statistic of marriage households from 1960 to 1990 uncovers a major decline not only in married couples but in the stability of the basic family structure. In the 1960's 78% of black families with children were married, by the 1970's it dropped to 64 percent. In the 1980's the statistics continued to drop to 48 % and by the 1990's it was at 39%.[20]

A once stable family structure that served the African American community well for over 125 years after slavery has taken a nose dive with no visible signs of recovery. Many factors go into this phenomenon namely, the industrial revolution, social acceptance of single-person households, cohabitation, and better jobs.[21]

This data becomes critical when compared to the U.S. trends and the Percept Vista data for the Central Topeka community. When compared side-by-side, it would appear that the Central Topeka community can be viewed as a microcosm of the United Stated. This is important because it would suggest that the historical data about inner city woes is not foreign to the author's context.

Just as the diversification among black families is on the increase, so is the emergence of social class. Social class systems in the African American community are

[19] Ibid., 36.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid.

primarily based on income and job mobility. Some of the more frequently used and well known social systems include the nonworking poor, the working poor, the non-poor working class, the middle class and a few that are called the upper class.[22]

The reason that we must discuss social class stratification in black families is because the higher up the socioeconomic ladder families go, "the more likely there are to be husband-wife families. Higher socioeconomic black families are also more likely to have working spouses helping to sustain this status. Social class and family status are directly related.[23]

The above statement tends to be true in the opposite direction. The lower you are on the class scale, the more likely there is no husband-wife families, but rather families that are headed by single parents. According to Billingsley's research and statistical data, this was the case 75% of the time.[24]

The final point this author will discuss about the African American family is that it cannot be strong unless it is supported by a strong community. In recent decades, the support and strength of the African American community has dwindled. The one sure place where values, morals and institutions were vibrant, now cease to exist. The black community can be perceived as a social system. Within the community, value and congruence exist; and a significant segment of its constituents share norms, sentiments

[22] Ibid., 46.

[23] Ibid., 57.

[24] Ibid.

and expectations…Even through diversity exist within the community, its members are held together by adherence to commonly shared values and goals.[25]

This paper will now examine possibly the one institution that has played a critical role in the strength of the black family over the years; the black church.

Dr. Myron Chartier gives a good understanding of the relationship of the church and the black family. He said:

> The Gospel has the power to liberate men and women from the contemporary forms of enslavement in a new community, the church. Central to Christian community is an intimate relationship with God through the empowering work of the Holy Spirit. The same spirit has led these believers into a reconciling interpersonal relationship with one another. Indeed, the Gospel of God binds men and women to one another as well as to God.[26]

It is unbelievable that the black church has been one of the most stable institutions in the life of the black family and now, it is losing its effectiveness. At one time building black churches became a form of economic empowerment and job generation for the people in the community.

The church began to grow and spread its arms far and wide influencing such institutions as banks, schools, insurance companies and low income housing. It also served as a platform for political action as well as nurtured young talent for musical, dramatic, artistic development and leadership.

Overall, the black church is still vibrant and represents one of the most stable and influential institutions in the black community. Although the church has experienced a number of road blocks, it still is a giant pillar of hope.

[25] Ibid., 71.

[26] Wallace Charles Smith, *The Church in the Life of the Black Family* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1895), 23.

One of the road blocks that the church experienced was that of the class system. As the class system became more defined because of economic empowerment, the middle class black began to congregate in more intentional ways. The church became somewhat of a closed system and not all blacks were welcomed in some churches. These churches quickly made a name for themselves as they grew in numbers and economic power. This growth and change in attitude because of class caused the church to split along class lines. Even today, these class lines still exist and they continue to be problematic for the inner city black communities.

The most important question for the church as it looks to the future is whether it is willing to meet the challenge of transcending class boundaries and reach out to the poor. If the traditional black church fails in its attempts to include the urban poor, the possibility of a black church of the poor may emerge.[27]

And so, as we can see, there is much foundational data to support the need for moving the church to a new awareness of church growth through the process of deconstruction that leads to reconstruction. The inner city is constantly growing and becoming increasingly poor. Many of the traditional black churches are no longer identifying with the needs of the poor and the emergence of the "store-front" church is in high gear. In addition there is an increase in the numbers of mega-churches growing in the urban core as well as in nearby suburban areas.

The author believes that a viable congregational development program will enable churches that are located in the inner city to rethink their vision and mission to include

[27] Ibid., 384.

the needs of the surrounding community by determining what it is going to take to get the pre-churched to participate with the churched.

Theological Foundations

We have seen that the bible is not silent on the subject of church growth and congregational development through evangelism and discipleship. Church growth and congregational development through evangelism and discipleship is not only important in the sacred canon, it is also a critical topic in theological circles. It is the authors experience and based on a review of the theological literature that congregational development and church growth is becoming one of the fastest growing ideals of the 21st century.

Let's began with the book of Ezekiel chapter thirty three. Ezekiel was a prophet during the Babylonian exile. For a broad outline of the book, the first 32 chapters of Ezekiel could be thought of as a description of the departure of the glory from Israel from the Promised Land; of God's chastening. And the latter portion of the book, from chapter 33 to 48 could be thought of as the return of the glory, or God's comfort, or God's grace, or redemption of the nation of Israel.

At the beginning of this latter section, note what Ezekiel writes in the first five verses of chapter 33:

> And the word of the Lord came to me saying, "Son of man, speak to your countrymen and say to them: When I bring the sword against a land, and the people of the land choose one of their men and make him their watchman, and he sees the sword coming against the land and blows the trumpet to warn the people, then if anyone hears the trumpet but does not take warning and the sword comes and takes his life; his blood will be on his own head. Since

> he heard the sound of the trumpet but did not take warning, his blood will be on his own head. If he had taken warning, he would have saved himself[28]

Here Ezekiel is describing the function of a watchman. The word watchman comes from the Hebrew word that means one who is stationed on the wall of a city. The job of the watchman was to be stationed on the wall of the city and to be scanning the horizon to look for impending danger; to look for armies or other threats to the city. His job is to sound the warning. There is an implicit meaning of alert and active watching for the safety of the city that he is watching over and that he is watching to protect.

To give you an idea of the significance of the word watchman, it is the same word that the psalmist uses in Psalm 66:7 to describe the intent gaze that the Lord watches over the nations. However notice what Ezekiel also writes in verse six:

> But if the watch man sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet to warn the people and the sword comes and takes the life of one of them, that man will be taken away because of his sin, but I will hold the watchman accountable for his blood.[29]

According to the bible, the watchman had the responsibility to warn the people and if he neglected that duty, or if he failed in that duty then he, in essence, had the death penalty imposed upon him. The blood of the city would be upon his head. Although Ezekiel is a prophet or messenger of God, if he did not faithfully deliver the Word of God as God had given it to him, then God would require the blood of the people from Israel's own head. And he would be liable for their lives.

[28] Eze. 33:1-6 NIV (New International Version)

[29] Ibid.

This brief exegesis of Ezekiel 33:1-6 provides a strong theological framework for the work of pastors and modern day prophets and evangelists who are called to be the twenty-first century watchman/women. These people are the watchmen/women that God has placed in various communities to care for, to shepherd, and to watch over the flock, and to warn the flock of impending danger. Their role is to also warn the unbelievers; people that do not know Jesus Christ as their Savior of this wrath that is to come.

Today, there is a movement that is sweeping across the face of Christianity; and the sad reality is that most of Christianity is not prepared to deal with this phenomenon called the church growth movement. The church growth movement has been gaining momentum in America for the last thirty or forty years; and now it is being exported abroad. Pastors and church leaders must be aware of the church growth movement in addition to understanding the philosophy and the theology behind it.

In order to speak coherently on the subject of congregational development and church growth, we can begin by looking at its origins. According to many theologians and bible scholars, the church growth movement had its modern beginnings around the nineteenth century with Charles Finney. Finney denied almost every major key doctrine of the Christian faith such as regeneration, original sin, salvation by faith alone, repentance and substitutionary atonement; however, Finney was an advocate of pragmatism. Not necessarily pragmatism as a philosophy by that name, but he was an advocate of pragmatism. This is something he wrote in his lectures on the revivals of religion, "There is nothing in religion beyond the ordinary powers of nature, and a revival is not a miracle or dependent in a miracle in any sense. It is a purely philosophical result

of the right use of the constituted means. A revival is as naturally a result of the use of means as crop is of the use of its appropriate means."[30]

Pragmatism or the pragmatic approach is something that was championed by William James and the educator John Duey. Pastor MacArthur, in the book, *Ashamed of the Gospel* defined pragmatism this way, "Pragmatism is the notion that meaning or worth is determined by practical consequences; the belief that usefulness is the standard of what is good. To a pragmatist, if a technique or course of action has a desired effect it is good. If it doesn't seem to work, then it must be wrong."[31] This may be a repackaging of the thinking that the ends justify the means.

Thom S. Rainer, church consultant and theologian says that when he shares his belief about the decline of most churches with pastors and church leaders they respond with anger and indignation. "Why bother with doctrine?" they inquired. "Why can't we show people the love of Jesus and leave the theological debates to others?"[32]

Rainer says that without a biblical foundation, we have no way of knowing the content of our witness to the world, or of knowing our commands to communicate the gospel. Only in Scripture do we see clearly that we are sinners in need of forgiveness and purification (Isaiah 6:1-6). Only in the Bible do we read clearly that we all are sinners who have fallen short of God's glory (Romans 3:23).[33]

[30] Clay Miller, "Church Growth Gone Mad: A sobering look at the church growth seeker-sensitive models" (Bethel Baptist Church Article, Wilmington, Delaware, 2003).

[31] Ibid.

[32] Thom S. Rainer, "*Why theology matters for the Great Commission task - Evangelism without theology is no evangelism,*" The Southern Seminary Magazine, November 2000, 16-17.

[33] Ibid.

Unlike pastors who believed that everyone is basically good, the Bible teaches that humanity's true nature is perverted and corrupted by sin (Romans 7:18). The task of evangelism is made urgent by the biblical teaching that we are sinners in need of a Savior.

The natural tendency of humanity is to be blind to our sin. And without the convicting words of Scripture, we may be tempted to think in the same way as a doubting pastor, that people are basically good. With the viewpoint that evangelism is not necessary, a lecture on self-esteem would be more meaningful. The writer of Hebrews warns us to take heed to the truth of God's Word: "For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it. For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard" (Hebrews 2:1-3).[34]

In his book, *Death of the Church,* Mike Regele says that we believe that the invisible church of Jesus Christ exist outside of and independent from culture. However, the visible church, which manifests itself in every era and place as a social institution, reflects the social norms and beliefs of its host culture. He says that in awakenings, the religious community turns its focus toward "matters of the heart" and one's spiritual relationship with God. Regele makes a strong argument regarding the church being the building versus the church being the body of Christ. He believes that buildings are not a prerequisite for being the church and that this was the teaching and thinking of the Old

[34] Ibid.

Testament that had been superseded by the new covenant. Regele insists that the emphasis should be on the heart, not external structures of brick and mortar.[35] This statement is an important foundation for the support of community based ministry in the face of exclusive church clubs where members are not welcoming of and interested in the concerns of the larger community around it.

The literature review makes a compelling argument that communities today are in need of deconstruction. Isolation, separation and elitism have become the hallmark attributes of churches that anchor our communities. Getting congregations and pastors to work together toward the common good of the entire community is a very daunting task.

At one point, it was thought that community organizing was the "one size fits all" approach to solving this long and systemic problem. However, it was evident based on the overall condition of the community that although organizers were successful in getting pastors and community leaders together, self-interest continued to be the prevailing attitude.

We have discovered that church growth is attainable when the congregation makes a real effort to get involved in community issues and create ministries that meet community need. The Christian community cannot sit idly by and allow the pre-churched to continue to be victims of social systems that self-perpetuate their own self-interest. Therefore, we must be willing to explore new ways of sustaining the church by causing Christian persons to take a more active and vested role in the life of the church and the life of the community.

[35] Mike Regele, *Death of the Church* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 38.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

Supporting the Hypothesis

We will now turn our attention to the process by which this project gained flesh. In order to fully discuss the methodology that was used, it is necessary to first restate the hypothesis that informed this work.

The hypothesis that informed this work is that if churches submitted to the biblical mandate of discipleship and evangelism and implement a congregational growth and development model of deconstruction that leads to reconstruction, an "Ideal Church" can emerge to sustain both congregation and community.

The inner-city church and the community must be linked together to bring about change, transformation, revitalization and better living conditions. This can happen when congregations are empowered to meet the needs of the community while simultaneously increasing its membership and ministry opportunities.

It is no secret that inner-city communities are suffering from a lack of economic resources, political importance and social skills necessary to negotiate successful relationships. If inner-city communities are to be transformed, the church is one of the most viable and credible institutions available to get the job done. However, churches must begin to look beyond its walls and see the needs of the community around them.

Within inner-cities all across America, there is an increasing population of people who are deemed poor and down trodden. There is an increase in the level of crime, unemployment, teen deaths, sexual molestation, single parent households and drop-outs among high school aged students. There are also a visible number of churches through the inner-city. The question that must be asked is why there are so many churches within the inner-city, yet the spiritual, social and economic conditions of the people who live around these churches are at the lowest levels in the nation?

To answer this question honestly would be an indictment to churches that exist within the inner-city. While this author is not suggesting that inner-city churches are not concerned about the plight of the inner-city, this author is suggesting they have lost their effectiveness and zeal for being the church for the community. We have already read that one time in the history of the African-American community, the church stood as a beacon of hope and an outpost for economic development, banking, job enrichment and social development. Today, in many inner-cities across America, the church seems to only exist from one Sunday to the next. It also seems that the church is losing the battle over "What to do on Sunday," as many people are finding a variety of other activities in which to participate such as golf outings, teenage and children soccer, baseball games, picnics, social brunches and civic luncheons.

It is critical that the church begin to take the church out of the building and extend itself into the larger community by providing services and ministries that meet the needs of the community. The church must become the "church without walls" so that all of the community can benefit from the love, support, talent and resources that are often contained within the walls of the building. This is one of the reasons the writer believe

that inner-city churches are on the decline; they have refused to share their wealth and resources with those persons living within their reach.

The writer believes that a church without an awareness and sensitivity to the biblical mandate of evangelism and discipleship will find it difficult to compete for loyalty among persons who have needs that extend beyond religious entertainment.

Understanding the Conditions

Now that we have examined the hypothesis, we will now consider the potential problems that existed prior to the author's arrival in the community where this project took place. A closer look at AMO would indicate that the congregation is in critical need of revitalization and members must be apprised of the various types of vital congregational settings. Very few members actually know what a vital congregation should be. It is incumbent upon the pastor and church leaders that a process of deconstruction of old antiquated methods and values take place in order that the reconstruction of new, creative and innovative methods of being the church is established. When members are aware of the traditional signs of vitality and vital congregations, it will be able to re-vision or envision fresh possibilities for themselves, their church and their community.

Therefore, the author sees as a model, deconstruction that leads to reconstruction whereby the "Ideal Church" can be birthed from the dreams, passions and hopes of the people. The author is clear on the issue that in order for the church to sustain a future that will exceed her lifetime, members must submit to a total transformation or extreme makeover. This makeover is not withstanding the need for longer term pastorates and the

stabilization and spiritual growth of current and future members. As the author looks at her particular context, the area called Central Topeka, it is clear, based on the historical record that this area is in desperate need of coming together as "community" for the purpose of survival and sustainability. This once thriving area of the city is undergoing tremendous changes in ethnicity and cultural identity and therefore, the search for common ground is necessary. The author has strong convictions that in order for the community of Central Topeka to remain vital, a period of deconstruction that leads to reconstruction must take place. She sees deconstruction happening in the church, within the life of the community, in the minds of those life-long residents who remain in the area and in the attitudes and beliefs of the state and local governmental officials. She also sees the deconstruction of long standing values and beliefs held by the dominate culture giving way to a more inclusive and communal understanding of Shalom or community.

The process of reconstruction is one of preparing the hearts and minds of the people of the church as well as the community to adopt and accept a new creation that will emerge from collaborative participation and investment in a community that will be valued by residents and those transient persons who work in the area.

This methodology will attempt to use scripture related to church growth, evangelism and discipleship to move the congregation from local church self-interest to a more inclusive community-based model where both church and community can prosper.

Planning for this model was done with the assistance and in collaboration with several context associates and the professional associates. The context associates were primarily members of Asbury Mount Olive United Methodist Church who also served as officers and elected leaders within the life of the congregation. It was important for the

context associates to be leaders within the life of the congregation because they would be the ones who would ultimately mobilize and energize the congregation for action. The professional associates were used in helping to design the data collection instruments and reading of reports, analyzing of the data and editing of the document.

Several strategy meetings were held over a two month period. In these meetings, we discussed the most effective and practical methods of retrieving the data needed to make this process viable based on the conditions of the community. We discussed how critical it was for the context associates to be actively involved in the total project and we created a covenant that necessitated honesty, integrity, timeliness and responsibility.

Inherent in this model and critical to our methodology was the project limitations and assumptions. The limitations and assumptions will be discussed in the next section.

Components of the Model

This model will seek to utilize several methods of retrieving data. This section was administered with the assistance of the context associates. We used several methods because we wanted a broad range of opportunities for people to participate. We realized that participating in research studies is not a favorite activity for our members and community; often times they feel imposed upon with when asked "too many questions."

Community and Congregational Questionnaires

This questionnaire was designed to determine the needs of the people who lived in the community. It was also used to ascertain the awareness and concern of the residents. We wanted to use questionnaires as a first step for the community residents

because we did not want to frighten them away. We also felt that using questionnaires would provide the most user friendly method of retrieving data. Without a doubt, many of the community residents who participated in this segment of the study had many educational challenges and using questionnaires made it easier for them to participate.

We asked several questions in this section. These questions tried to capture in a very concise way the attitudes and feelings of the residents toward the church, the local governmental officials and the community in general. These questions were done in two parts, one using simple yes and no responses and then a section that asked the respondents to write out how they really felt. It was important in this section to hear the voice of the respondent to reduce the amount of bias contained in the questionnaire instrument.

Some of the questions asked in this section were: 1) Would you like to be involved in activities during the week for you and your children; 2) What would you like to see improved in your community; 3) What are the biggest problems you see in the community 4) Do you feel you are getting adequate support from the police, board of education, city government and your state representative.

The congregational questionnaires were used to assess the effectiveness of the various segments of the New Jerusalem Model and the willingness of the members to commit to a process of deconstruction that leads to reconstruction so that the ideal church can emerge. The questionnaires were used to uncover some of the reasons that members failed to participate in the life of the church and the community. The questionnaires also sought to solicit written answers that would allow for the formation of new ministries and the creation of systems that would help facilitate interest and growth in this area.

Stewardship Workshop

The stewardship workshop was designed to provide a working biblical definition of stewardship for our members and then to expand this definition to how stewardship is experienced in our personal, communal, financial and political life. In presenting the workshop in this manner, it created a well rounded approach to stewardship so that the giving of money could be viewed as part of the whole.

The workshop focused on the participant's spiritual gifts and how each member's spiritual gifts are necessary in sustaining stewardship within the life of the congregation as well as the life of the community. Often times the church wants to see itself as a family and not a community of faith. In this section, we were able to show that community stewardship is what God had in mind rather than a closed-end family where only members are invited to participate.

Church-Wide Visioning Workshop

The church-wide visioning workshop was conducted to ascertain the feelings of the congregation regarding the ministry and mission of Asbury-Mount Olive UMC. It was conducted with the expressed intention of allowing the "silent" voices within the congregation to speak, and to discover a more accurate assessment of the future direction of the church.

Components of this workshop included discussion topics such as: 1) truth telling: What's really on your mind; 2) what do you want from your leadership; 3) what does the future of the church look like; 4) what should worship include; 5) what kinds of mission

opportunities should we be involved in; 6) what can we do to improve and insure our desired future for our church.

Church-Wide Evangelism Workshop

The evangelism worship was designed to assist members in understanding effective techniques in establishing relationships with people and how to talk about issues of faith in non-threatening ways. This workshop was done in a typical role-play style. It gave members the opportunity to see firsthand how their normal tendencies to evangelize can be modified to produce a more desirable result.

Members were also given an opportunity to dialogue together regarding the many stereotypical images that are present among Christians towards others. This process worked to enhance the overall awareness of how easy it is to misjudge people based on acceptable yet inappropriate societal norms and behaviors. It was also discovered in this workshop that many inappropriate social norms transcend culture and racial lines by all Christians attempting to make disciples for Jesus Christ.

Bible Study

The Bible study and were intended to go deeper into the Word of God and provide a concentrated view and understanding of the New Jerusalem Model of deconstruction that leads to reconstruction. It was to show the intentionality of God in establishing a people and church that would be pleasing in God's sight. Participants in this segment were allowed to hear the word of God from specific texts and then express their misconceptions and gain clarity on how much better and complete our communities

would be if biblically based models of discipleship and evangelism were implemented. This was also a time of visioning and reflection on the ways we allow God to work in our lives currently and how these ways can be expanded.

One-On-Ones

One-on-ones were used to retrieve data from the community residents and the members of the congregation. The one-on-ones were used to plunge deeper into the hearts of the respondents to get at what really mattered to them. This was time of listening and hearing based on specific questions that were designed to move beyond the surface of what the respondent felt about their community.

Getting the one-on-ones done was a large project within itself. One of the more difficult aspects of performing the one-on-ones in the community surrounding the church was establishing "safe sanctuary" for both the respondent and the interviewer. This process was not difficult to the members of the congregation, but quite a task for the members of the community. Appointments were missed without explanation, persons came very late to their appointment, and the most frequent problem was that once people were at the designated location, it was difficult to enter into dialogue with them.

CHAPTER FIVE

FIELD EXPERIENCE

This ministry project focused on the Asbury Mount Olive United Methodist Church, an inner-city African American congregation located on the margins of downtown Topeka Kansas.

The objectives of this project were to increase the congregations' relationship with the community. The writer believes that if the church is to meet the demands of the inner-city and also be faithful to the biblical mandate of making disciples of all people, it must begin by teaching the congregation how to be faithful to scripture. She says, "The church can no longer afford the luxury of living in isolation, implementing programs that only serve our interest and ignore the needs of those around us." In order for the church to build community and meet the needs of those around it, there must be intentional church-wide discipleship, evangelism, stewardship and Christian education that lead to spiritual, missional, financial, numerical and programmatic church growth.

The project design and implementation plan began on February 3, 2007 with the design of the community questionnaires, the Bible Study Series and the compilation of resource used in the congregational workshops. From February 3rd until the end of July, 2007 the context team and the author worked very deliberately at maintaining the timeline set forth at the beginning of this work. Their work was exciting and very transformative in nature.

The case study approach was used in this project to provide a collective understanding of how the congregation and community residents felt about the neighborhood and how they saw the role of the church and community.

Within the case study approach there were several different opportunities to obtain information from the congregation and the community residents. Included in these methods were one-on-one interviews with selected community residents, a Bible study series on discipleship and evangelism through deconstruction and reconstruction, and workshops on discipleship and evangelism, stewardship and visioning, This project sought to understand how the members of the community felt about the neighborhood, the agencies within the neighborhood, and their interaction with local governmental officials, the role of the church within the community and their experience of Asbury Mount Olive United Methodist Church. We then wanted to understand the level of discipleship and evangelism education and participation within the Asbury Mount Olive United Methodist Church from among its members.

In conducting the research, personal interviews or one-on-ones, open-ended interviews and structured questionnaires were used as methods of data collection. Qualitative data analysis was the primary method of analysis while some questions required quantitative data analysis.

We will now discuss the results of selected component of the model in detail. Within each component of the model, we analyzed the responses of the respondents and at the conclusion of each component; we will share how the results of this model affected our congregation and community.

Tennessee Town Community Survey

The community survey was a critical component of the entire project. It was important to hear from a community that is plagued with gang activity, drugs, inadequate housing and other negative forces. It was also important to hear from a community that is in the process of being redeveloped and reestablished as a vital community.

In conducting the community survey, we found that the members of the community had some rather strong comments regarding the level of gang activity, drugs and the lack of jobs in their area. Approximately 40 respondents took part in the community survey over a one month period. In response to Question 1 ("What can the church do to help you help yourself?"), 10 out of 20 or 505% of the respondents felt that the church could pray for them as they responded "pray for me," while 5 out of 20 respondents felt that the church could help improve the employment situation. Some of the responses were, "Help me with a job," "Find a job" and "Job training."

Question 2 – 6 sought to establish how the community residents felt about Asbury Mount Olive United Methodist Church. Many of the respondents already participate is a few of the ongoing ministries of the church. These questions served to give the church an idea of the needs of the community that can be met by new and ongoing ministry programs.

In response to Question 2, ("Would you like to see an after school program?") 27 out o 30 or 90% of the respondents answered yes. This question is critical to establishing new ministries within tall churches within the Tennessee Town Community. Question 3, ("Would you lie to be involved in activities during the week for you and your children?")

18 out of 26 or 69% said yes and 8 out of 26 o 31% said no. Question 4, ("Would you like the feeding program to be opened longer on a daily basis?") 28 out of 29 or 96% said yes. Question 5, ("Are you interested in volunteering in church related activities?") 23 out of 29 or 79% said yes and 6 out of 29 or 21% said no. Question 6, ("Does your immediate family live in the community?") 23 out of 27 or 85% said yes and 4 out of 27 or 15% said no.

The responses to questions 2-6 indicated that the church could benefit as well as assist the community residents by creating ministries that foster team building. This is apparent because of the large percentage of respondent families living in the area and the willingness of the respondents to participate in church related activities.

Questions 7-9 sought to determine how the community residents felt about the quality of life in the community. These questions also sought to gain specific insight into the respondent's perceptions of what the problems were, how the community could be improved and how the churches in the area could assist in mobilizing the community.

In response to Question 7, ("What would you like to see improved in your community?") 15 out of 40 or 37% said removal of drugs and increased police protection, 7 out of 40 or 17% of the respondents said schools, day care and education. 11 out of 40 or 27% said parks, recreational facilities and better housing. 12 % said more jobs. Other responses were better churches and increased feeding programs and food pantries.

In response to Question 8, ("What are the biggest problems you see in this community?") 8 out of 16 or 50% said drugs, gangs and violence, 4 out of 16 or 25% said not enough people working with kids and youth. Other responses were related to food distribution centers, traffic, and people standing on street corners.

In response to Question 9, ("Do you feel that if churches got together they could help bring about the necessary changes in order to make the community better?") 38 out of 40 or 95 % said yes. Some of the responses were, "Because they are good helpers when you are in need of something," "Because people of God will do what it takes to change things even if it is through personal sacrifice," "People need to believe in something that's going to help not just get money and title and don't help the community," and "Churches are tax free organizations that can bring back the family unit."

In performing one-on-one conversations with members of the community regarding if they received adequate support from the police, board of education, city government and their state representatives, the consensus was fairly even.

Overall, the responses to the community survey showed a great need for the revitalization of services from agencies and churches within the community. The survey indicated an overall high percentage of residents being receptive to working together to build a better community. The responses made it clear that the residents were not oblivious to the real issues that have plagued this community for years. The results of the survey also indicated willingness on the part of the community to welcome change and assistance from Asbury Mount Olive United Methodist Church as well as other churches within the area.

Bible Study Series

The bible study series was developed in an effort to educate the congregation toward the Biblical mandate of discipleship and evangelism and how proper congregational growth principles could assist in transforming their community. The Bible study encouraged each participant to explore ways they could become better disciples and evangelist. They were encouraged to identify types of ministries activities and projects that would demonstrate to the church and community the congregation's desire to be in partnership with the community.

The Bible study series was held on four consecutive Wednesday's for approximately two hours. The class size was approximately 16 persons. The class gender inclusive and ages of the participants were between 27-80 years of age.

The class used an open discussion format where each participant was allowed to make comments regarding the passage of scripture being discussed. Each participant was encouraged to speak in first person to personalized the discussion and provide for introspection when necessary.

All of the data for the Bible study series was qualitative and the questionnaire was designed to highlight stewardship in the context of "Our response to God." In response to Question 1, ("What did you learn about God's desire for us to be faithful disciples and evangelists?") it was clear from the various responses that the participants learned a great deal. The participants gained a greater appreciation for discipleship and evangelism because they did not realize that discipleship and evangelism is a mandate and desire of God. They also learned that discipleship and evangelism is not always about members in

the pew. Some of the responses were, "Being faithful disciples and evangelist is not always about the numbers," " We must be willing to reach outside the walls of the church," and "The focus is not on numbers in the pew but on the added value from smiles, encouragement and relationships."

In response to Question 2, ("How will you use what you have learned to become a more effective disciple and evangelist?") the participants were given a chance to articulate how they can put to use their learning for the betterment of the community and their church. Some of the responses were, "It does not take a lot of time to be a faithful disciple for God," "I will work to share the benefits of evangelism with others," "I will encourage more members to participate in the broader community," and "I will take advantage of my discipleship development."

In response to Question 3, ("Did anything you have learned make you excited about being a better disciple and evangelist?") the participants were given a chance to reflect on any new learning they obtained regarding discipleship and evangelism and then affirm their own individual growth. Based on the responses, this question caused the participants to really think about their individual responsibility for being a more effective disciple and evangelist as well a how they were going to effect change in the congregation's communal discipleship and evangelism efforts.

Some of the responses were, "I must work hard on having a forgiving spirit, I must share the word to those in need," "I find comfort in knowing the Lord will provide if we follow God's commandments, "Sacrifice will be returned in multiple ways," and "Not being afraid to share my gifts and show my talents."

In response to Question 4, ("Are you motivated to encourage others in the congregation about being more effective disciples and evangelist? If so, how will you encourage them?") The participants were not only able to affirm their growth and motivation to be better disciples and evangelists with others, but they were also able to share why it is important to do so. This question moved to the heart of congregational responsibility as disciples and evangelist of God's blessings. Some of the responses were, "Yes, by speaking of the good work the ministries are doing." "By giving a name to all of the work we do in the church," and "Being in ministry is fun while at the same time doing what God would have us do."

Overall the discipleship and evangelism Bible study series created a great sense of responsibility within the life of the congregation. Participants went away with a greater appreciation for what it means to be effective disciples and evangelist and they also were motivated to start a discipleship and evangelism ministry within the life of the church.

I feel that most important aspect of this study was the participants were no longer ashamed of asking other members to "step-up" and get involved in the life of the church. I believe it gave them a sense of purpose and pride in the life of the church and the community as well.

Stewardship Workshop

The stewardship workshop was designed to provide a working definition of stewardship. This workshop took a basic theological and biblical understanding of stewardship and developed it into a broader more comprehensive understanding. The

workshop was designed to uncover stewardship in several areas of life to include our personal life, our financial life, our community life and our political life. It was also designed to show stewardship as being biblically based, exciting, faith strengthening, innovated, life changing and congregation-renewing.

Over 20 members participated in the stewardship workshop held on a Friday evening and concluding the following Sunday afternoon. The age span of those attending was 14-80. There were four youth in attendance as future leaders and decision-makers. The workshop was interactive and full of passion.

In response to Question 1, ("The workshop was helpful in being able to deal with issues at hand") 10 out of 20 or 50% strongly agreed while 10 out of 20 or 50% agreed. Some of those who strongly agreed responded, "These types of workshops shed light on the various ways of stewardship," and "I am encouraged to not only talk about issues but stand for issues." Some of those who agreed responded, "It makes me really think." And "It stressed the importance of making a commitment to church and God."

In response to Question 2, ("The workshop encouraged me to truly consider stewardship as critical and vital in the life of the church and community," 10 out o 16 or 63% strongly agreed and 6 out of 16 or 37% agreed. Some of the responses of those who strongly agreed were, "It is a must and required by God," and "I must face the facts and do it; this is God's way." One of those who agreed responded, "It was instrumental in stressing that what we do as stewards affected not only my local church, but it affects others in a more global sense."

In response to Question 3, ("The workshop raised concerns that needed to be addressed by people today") 19 out of 20 or 95% strongly agreed. Some of their responses were, "People need to know stewardship involves more than just money, especially since we worship things as opposed to God," and "We must do the work of ministry for people who look for the church to provide hope."

In response to Question 4, ("The workshop motivated me to consider a new approach in addressing challenges in my life.") 11 out of 20 or 55% strongly agreed while 9 out of 20 or 45% agreed. Some of the responses of those who strongly agreed were, "I look at giving as a privilege rather than a requirement," and " It makes me rethink things before I act."

In response to Question 5, ("it is the responsibility of the church to address many of the social and communal needs of the community,") all respondents strongly agreed. Some of the responses were, "I strongly agree because the church can change a community," "The church must make a commitment to the community to make sure there are no poor among us," "It is the responsibility of Christian to address the issues of the community where the church resides," and "Everyone needs to know they are valued and needed in the life of the church."

In response to question 6, ("There is a critical need for the church to develop an ongoing process of stewardship education,") 19 out of 20 or 95% of the respondents strongly agreed. Some of the responses were, "The church must educate the people on the spiritual nature of stewardship," "Most church members don't know about stewardship," and "Everybody should have an idea about stewardship."

Overall, I feel the participants gained a strong sense of purpose and knowledge regarding stewardship. I also believe that based on their comments and responses, they felt good about realizing that much of what they already do is considered stewardship activities.

Overall Results

Overall, a tremendous amount of "enlightenment" was attained from the congregation and the context team of this project model. There seemed to be a spirit of renewed confidence in the life of the congregation as members began to get involved and use their gifts to expand the mission and ministry opportunities within the church and community.

Prior to the implementation of this model, Asbury Mount Olive Church experienced very few ministries that extended beyond the walls of the church and into the community. Many of the existing ministries had been repeated for years with little or no modification.

Directly after the completion of this field work, Asbury Mount Olive experienced a sharp increase in ministries that enhanced the viability and self-esteem of the congregation. I feel it very important to share with you in narrative form the accomplishment of this congregation as it engages the biblical mandate for discipleship and evangelism.

Increased attendance in worship. This is possibly one of the most exciting improvements that Asbury Mount Olive Church has attained thus far. When I first arrived at the church in July of 2005, the average worship attendance was between 65-70 persons

per Sunday. By July, 2006 the average attendance grew to 100 members per Sunday and today, the average attendance is between 130-150 persons per Sunday. During the implementation of this project our average worship attendance grew by 50%.

Revitalization of Bible Study participation. Prior to July 2005, we had only 8 persons regularly attending Wednesday night Bible Study. Today we are averaging 45 persons on a regular basis and 30 persons who attend our Spiritual Formation classes.

Church-wide leadership training. The congregation participation in the first in a series of leadership training events. The initial training was a two day event and was attended by over 50 % of the total leadership of the church. The goal of the initial training was to begin dialogue on the Biblical basis for leadership as contained in the Old and New Testaments. From this dialogue, the congregational leaders began the process of creating a church-wide vision statement and revision of the mission statement. The church leaders were also excited about their completion of a needs assessment and the setting of goals for future training and workshops.

Increased financial giving and promotion of stewardship campaign. Financial giving by the church has increased by 30% since the beginning of this project model. Several members of the congregation have taken seriously the biblical mandate to be faithful stewards of their financial resource and have pledged commitments to the church. The church has also purchased property and made various critical improvements to the building as a result of committed giving.

Expansion of existing ministries. This is another exciting benefit of our ministry model. In this area, we are pleased to have been able to modify and enhance our Youth

Fellowship, increase the community youth participation in church related programs and activities, establish a liturgical dance group and look to establish a youth choir.

Replicable Model

This ministry project has yielded some exciting benefits for Asbury Mount Olive United Methodist Church and the surrounding community. Our congregation is on fire with possibilities for ministry and mission opportunities to include all of the community. I believe that the excitement created by this model is based on an increased awareness of who God is and who God has called each of us to be in the life of our community of faith.

This model was designed from its inception to be shared with the broader community of faith. I believe that one of the greatest attributes of the United Methodist is its connectionalism and its vast reservoir of resources throughout the denomination. It is in the sharing of information that enables all congregations and communities of faith equitable opportunities to build up the body of Christ. This is of optimum importance to me. Although I am a loyal member of the United Methodist Church, my members come from all walks of life and many from other denominational settings. Oftentimes, there are several denominational churches within walking distance of each other. To be able to truly effect systemic change within the life of a community, the entire community must be transformed.

Being able to share this simple and user-friendly tool of change and transformation with people of all faith systems is truly a dynamic opportunity for the body of Christ. The best part about this model is that it does not require a major outlay of money or seminary training to implement.

CHAPTER SIX

REFLECTION, SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Reflections

When the author began this doctoral program, it was based on a well planed self-interest and the prodding of her mother and husband. It was her goal to be able to please her husband and satisfy the desires of her mother to become a doctor in the field of ministry. The attainment of this degree was also important because of the way women have been marginalized and stereotyped in ministry during her humble beginnings and even now; some twenty years later.

It was important for her to be able to say that she had earned her doctoral degree from the same place as many of the African American pastoral giants; especially women. In other words, the author's personal attainment of a doctoral degree from a seminary that has one of the most recognized doctoral programs in the country. Lastly, the author had as a goal to be the first person in her family to receive a doctoral degree.

While all of the above reasons are true, a much larger and more profound transformation has occurred in her life while on this journey. She does not know when it happened, but she realized that God's plan for her life was much larger than a title and a fancy robe; the importance of ongoing theological education and action research has shaped and molded her ministry in incredible ways. It all seemed like yesterday when

she entered the program concentrating in Congregational Development and Church Administration in an Urban Setting.

Little did she know that being open to the possibilities of what could be, allowed God to move in her life and have her appointed to an inner-city church with all of its stereotypes and issues. And so, she thanks God for the opportunity of "going through" and being able to come out on the other side with a greater appreciation for "her calling" to the work of urban ministry.

This ministry project has been a lesson in humility, patience, collaboration, teamwork and faith. It has stretched her beyond her limitations and has caused her to be a more effective pastor and a more effective leader within her community. This project has forced her to "trust the process," and not worry about being in control of situations and outcomes. It has forced her to make new friends and establish new standards for herself, her congregation and her community. And it has taught her about the nature of power and systems.

This project has helped her to realize why it is necessary to build a power base of and from the community to negotiate and change systems. Inherent in systems theory is the notion that the poor among us have all the problems. She has also discovered while participating in this doctoral program that the nature of systems theory urge the creation of community development organizations, community development corporations and community based organizations at the expense of uninformed people.

All of this information points to why inner-city communities are controlled by city systems.[1] It is because the people have been convinced that organizations that support city-systems are working in the best interest of the people when ultimately, the city is the only organism that prospers. This is one of the primary reasons that congregations and communities must be deconstructed and then reconstructed. Without the process of deconstruction that leads to reconstruction, families, congregations and communities will continue to repeat the error of their past, hoping that something new will emerge.

Within the boundaries of the inner-city, especially where African-Americans are heavily populated are a large number of African-American churches. It is the African-American church that has been able to transcend the systemic forces of manipulation and corruption and provide a sense of hope for the people of the community. However, in recent years, the African-American church has been plagued with a decrease in members for a variety of reasons.

Two reason why the African-American church is losing members are because of the death of older members and because city-systems that have created distractions to Sunday morning worship and the sustaining force of the church in the life of the community.

When the author arrived at Asbury Mount Olive United Methodist Church in July 2005, she realized that city-systems had systematically destroyed a community over time.

[1] City systems in this document refers to the deliberate control of power by regulatory authorities at the expense of those who depend on those same authorities for their survival and existence. The illusion of shared or relational power in this instance creates the seductive nature of these systems to maintain control over people and organizations seeking relational power with the regulatory authorities.

Her work in this doctoral program coupled with prior experience in community organizing allowed her to structure this project to assist in creating a healthy congregation that will over time help to recreate a more healthy community at large.

Today, the author understands fully why the Asbury Mount Olive church did not associate with the people of the community and she began to understand why the church was not growing. The systems of the city had caused the people of the community to be divided in multiple ways and discouraged the coming together of the people around common issues. Those persons who were in the community and worked for the city government were in the community but not of the community. There was no vested interest in saving the inner-city and consequently, there was no real concern.

Likewise, there are several churches within the community whose members are largely from outside the community. Many of these persons may have been raised in the community but have since benefited from "the system" and now live outside the community. While they come into the community on Sunday mornings to attend church, these persons are blinded to the conditions and circumstances of the community; therefore, they are unaffected by what goes on.

This ministry project was designed to move beyond "church business as usual" and encourage the members of the congregation to see their church and the community as God sees them. This is why the New Jerusalem Model of deconstruction that leads to reconstruction based on the biblical mandate of discipleship and evangelism was such a critical lesson to learn and experience. Without knowing it, the Asbury Mount Olive church had become a containment church where the intelligentsia was contained within the walls of the church building but never shared with the people in the community.

The congregation had long forgotten about the struggle for freedom and liberation and they certainly had forgotten that God's church is a victorious church, a church for all people and a church that does not maintain "families" but establishes communities of faith where families find meaning and purpose in serving God and the people of God.

This project was designed to bring about transformative learning and change within the life of the church and the community but it met with subtle, yet powerful resistance from the members of the congregation. There seemed to be a sharp objection to establishing new paradigms and new methodologies for being the church from a select few. However, as the project moved forward, the members of the context team and other members of the congregation began to embrace this project as their own. It was then that we gained the necessary momentum toward transformative learning within the life of the church.

The feelings from those who embraced the process and the transformative learning attained from engaging the Bible created an overwhelming commitment to completing this project. The project was completed according to the schedule and we believe the community and the congregation will ultimately be better for it. The author knows that she will be a more compassionate pastor charged with helping to transform inner-city communities throughout America.

Summary

This ministry model was designed to assist inner-city churches to become aware of the biblical mandate of discipleship and evangelism and their responsibility to empower the congregation to assist in meeting the needs of the community and to

increase membership and ministry opportunity within the life of the church. The model was created to be replicated by churches of all denominations and sizes.

The participants of the model were the members of the congregation and members of the Tennessee Town community which is where the church is located. The members of the context team under the author's guidance and leadership designed this model. It was their goal to make the model user friendly and as hassle free as possible. They were careful not to pose questions and solicit information from the community residents that would be perceived as "going too far and asking too much." It was the consensus of the context team that many of the community residents were not willing to give too much personal information. They felt that insisting on getting personal data would decrease the level of participation and be detrimental to the project as a whole.

They were also aware and sensitive to community residents who may have had educational challenges and social skill limitations. This too, they felt would impede the quality of the data and their ability to get to the root causes of their concerns.

Many respondents were not able to read or write; therefore, the author had to obtain information from them by performing a modified one-on-one conversation. The modified one-on-ones did not take the place of a complete one-on-one, but it did allow those who were willing to respond to the questionnaire an opportunity to participate with a greater sense of dignity. It also gave members of the church who assisted with this area an opportunity to be empathetic to the needs and challenges facing people of the community. This process was very transformational for members of the church as well as the members of the community.

Those people from the community who had no apparent challenges completed the questionnaire when they frequented the daily food program. Members of the context team were able to administer the questionnaire with little or no opposition because of the existing relationship the church maintained with the community residents. The questionnaire generally took 15-20 minutes to administer.

Members of the congregation were able to express their lack of knowledge and an increased sense of personal gratification as they wrestled with the biblical test in the Bible study series and various workshops. Each of these settings was presented in an open dialogue format. There were no questions or answers that were considered "out of bounds" or out of place.

The Bible study series allowed those who attended to experience biblical exegesis as they worked to uncover the original meanings of the chosen texts. Key words were looked up, they talked about what was going on during the time of the writing of the text and they also identified the key personalities and conditions that existed during the time of the writing.

Next the participants were encouraged to relate the text to current day situations. This provided a powerful witness of how God is the same yesterday, today and forever in the minds of the participants. All participants were encouraged to think in terms of the congregation and finally think in terms of the broader community of faith. They were able to see clearly how little the church was doing based on the biblical mandate of effective discipleship and evangelism.

In retrospect, it was an exciting time for the congregation as they challenged themselves and each other to become better disciples of Jesus Christ. Members of the

congregation also felt a sense of pride as they were able to find new meaning in being able to give themselves permission to do for others what God has been doing for them all of their lives.

The one-on-ones was possibly the most helpful instrument of the project model. Doing one-on-ones with the congregation gave members an opportunity to share how they felt about their church and their community. It gave them an opportunity to talk about something they had a passion for without spending a lot of time talking about personal concerns. Performing the one-on-ones also provided an opportunity to see the church as the members saw it. It gave valuable insight into why things were the way they were and some possible methods for making modifications.

The one-on-ones with the residents were equally powerful. The time spent with the residents gave them an opportunity to get to know the author. Although she was attempting to gain information from the residents regarding the community from their worldview, they too, were gaining information regarding how long the author would be in the community and what her plans were for the life of the church. The author was greatly surprised at the number of residents from the community who knew as much about the history of the church as she did.

The context associates worked closely with the data once the implementation of the model was completed. Much reflection and dialogue ensued around the responses as members of the context team were able to see some of the reasons the congregation has suffered over the years. Without the context associates, this project would not have been possible.

Although the implementation of this model was successful, there are a few things the author would have done differently. First, she should have not have attempted nor does she suggest implementing any type of major transformative project as a new pastor in a new context unless the project is considered non-threatening to the congregation. She believes that a fairly new pastor should spend the first several years getting to know the congregation and establishing relationships and trust among the members.

One major mistake she made was in "not knowing" the congregation and the changes they were willing to undergo. While the congregation requested a pastor who could take charge and make changes that would make them more viable, they were not completely ready for change. Neither was the congregation ready for radical deconstruction that leads to the reconstruction of who they are. There needs to be a few years of providing nurture, love and support. There need to be a "welcoming in" of the pastor from the congregation and not the perception of the pastor as "taking over." Even though the congregation welcomed the author and gave her support, she discovered that it was only superficial. As long as deconstruction was being suggested and made to the physical structure, things went smooth. However, when the process of deconstruction was suggested for the members, things began to get stressful and resistance was notable.

If the author were to do this over again, she would have taken more time in preparing the congregation to think "outside the box." She would have been more intentional and deliberate in making sure they understood the implications of the process and the impact it would have on the life of the congregation.

She would have made sure more members of the congregation participated at the community outreach level of the project. She believes that improvement of the member's

perception of who is and is not accepted in the life of the church is needed. The church needs to grow in its understanding that what is done inside the building directly impacts what should be done outside the building.

Finally, she would have increased the sample size of the one-on –one interview. The one thing that continues to significantly impact her is the number of persons who felt they know her based on a 30 minute conversation. Imagine what the effect would have been on the church and the community if the congregation and author reached a significant percentage of the community residents and just "had a conversation."

Conclusion

The action reaches process has truly assisted in organizing information into a process that makes sense and also allows for quality research and learning. This process can be implemented over and over again for every new opportunity on the horizon. By continuing to us this process, research can be done very systematically and will bring forth meaningful results.

The work achieved utilizing this process has provided the author with excellent models for ministry in various settings. She has a greater understanding of inner-city dynamics and city systems. She also has a greater appreciation for the work of and the need for community organizers within the life of the inner-city.

She would have never experienced the work of ministry at this level had she not been exposed to Community based Urban Ministry. Many of her colleagues are pastoring churches without understanding the dynamics of the community and how to make a transformational impact. This is not the kind of information you get from a basic

seminary education and rarely do you get it from pastoring a church in isolation of the community.

With this in mind, there are three substantial conclusions she would like to render as a result of the work performed and completed on this project.

First, discipleship and evangelism must become core values to be learned and engaged in the life of the African-American church. The author believes the African-American church of old had a much greater appreciation of discipleship and evangelism and its impact on social responsibility than we do today. History supports the notion that in times of prosperity, people are less likely to share and be concerned about each other. Conversely, during times of crisis, despair and economic shortage, people somehow come together and rally around values that somehow keep them together.

The African-American church and community has experienced some of the best economic opportunities in many years, but its choices, its churches and its communities are progressively going in the opposite direction and they are being seduced by the dominant culture. Being intentional about the biblical mandate of discipleship and evangelism will guarantee a prolonged period of connectivity between the church and the community creating a wellspring of potential and opportunity for all.

Second, the community must be organized around the needs and core values of the people. The results of this research reveal that churches, institutions and governmental agencies are failing at meeting the needs of the community at large. The church is losing the battle in an arena where there should be no competition. However, because the church has neglected to organize and remain organized around the needs of the people, it has lost sight of what is truly important in the life of the community; the

people. There must be ongoing training in community organizing where the people of the community, including the churches are taught how to come together to address the needs of the people. The church must stop looking for systems and structures outside the community to provide stability within the community. It has not happened in the past and it probably will not happen in the future. Systems are not designed to benefit the people, but those who control the systems. The church must become organized and teach others to become organized within the community that it may be able to work cooperatively to achieve transformation and revitalization for all of the community.

Therefore, churches must teach its members the importance of sharing the gifts and talents that God gives people within the walls of the church with those who are less fortunate and may live in the community around the church.

Third, the church cannot afford to be disconnected from the community at the expense of the people in the community. The church cannot afford to contain its blessings for a few when it is commissioned to make disciples throughout the entire world. The church must not become satisfied with being able to meet the needs of its members and supporting itself without considering the impact it has on the larger community. Finally, the church under the banner of social action and social justice can assist the community in addressing many of the problems and concerns expressed by the community residents.

As it relates to the project model, educational and social skills are lacking within the life of this community. However, there is a wealth of talent within the life of the church that can address these needs. There are doctors, nurses, lawyers, school teachers, administrators, contractors, real estate professional, food service professionals and other areas of talent located within the walls of the church. When we reach out and connect

with the community, endless possibilities can exist of how the church and the community can complement each other, all under the banner of the biblical mandate of discipleship and evangelism.

APPENDIX A

THE IDEAL CHURCH

ASBURY-MOUNT OLIVE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
ALL CHURCH VISIONING RETREAT
THE IDEAL CURCH
2007

Gathering	8:30 – 9:00 A.M.
Opening Prayer	9:00 A.M.
Purpose	9:05 A.M.
Desired Outcomes	9:15 A.M.
Empowered By A Vision	9:15 – 9:30 A.M.
Truth Telling	9:30 – 10:00 A.M.
Check In – How Are You Feeling	10:00
Develop Areas of Consideration	10:15
Break	10:30 – 10:40 A.M.
Processing Our Feelings (Silent Exercise)	10:40 – 11:30 A.M.
Realizing Our Core Values	11:30 – 12:00 Noon
Next Steps	12:00 – 12:30 P.M.
One Phrase Evaluations	12:30 – 1:00 PM
Closing Prayer	1:00 P.M.

20 STEPS FOR BEING EMPOWERED BY YOUR VISION

01. Be concerned

02. Pray and plan

03. Don't rush

04. God uses your circumstances

05. What God originates, God orchestrates

06. Investigate before you initiate

07. Communicate vision as a solution to a problem

08. Cast your vision to appropriate people at the appropriate time

09. Don't expect others to take greater risk or make greater sacrifices than you have

10. Respond to criticism with prayer, remembrance and if necessary a revision of the plan

11. Don't confuse your plans with God' vision

12. Visions are refined – they don't change. Plans are revised, they rarely stay the same

13. Visions thrive in an environment of unity; they don't in an environment of division

14. Abandon the vision before you abandon moral authority

15. Don't get distracted

16. There is divine potential in what you envision to do

17. The end of a God ordained vision is God

18. In order to fulfill the vision of God, you must adhere to a set of values and core beliefs

19. Visions require constant attention

20. Maintaining a vision requires Bold leadership

The Ideal Church

The Ideal Church is born out of a Church-wide Visioning process where all members of the congregation get the opportunity to express their hopes and dreams about their beloved church or congregational setting.

The basis of the process is one of truth telling, soul search, discernment and prayer. It allows all voices to be heard and all ideas to be considered as part of a church-wide understanding of where we are and where we want to be.

This process follows the Congregational Development and Community Organizing process of holding in tension the church as it is and the church as it should be. When we do this, we are best able to identity the core values and characteristics of the congregation in a holistic and spirit filled way. **Therefore, much of the process is done in silence.**

I pray that you will get excited about the possibility of discovering in a spirit directed way where God is about to lead the church and how we as his servants can take an active role in making this vision a reality.

A. Begin with an interactive lecture that resembles a Bible Study on the 20 steps for being empowered by a vision as identified by the Old Testament book of Nehemiah.
B. Allow for a time of truth telling. This process is where members get the chance to make statements in first person (without outside comment) about how they feel about their church. This process usually leads to a time of purging, cleansing, self diagnosis and critical reflection.
C. Areas of Consideration – This process gives the participant the opportunity to develop areas of concern or consideration and to identify in their own mind what an Ideal Church looks like. This exercise should also establish a sense of purpose in the minds of those present as a team atmosphere is created.
D. Identifying Core Values – This process is used to establish the underlying beliefs and values of the congregation as a whole. As core values are established and implemented, the congregation can move with greater confidence toward a cohesive vision plan that can be realized based on the synergy of all the members.
E. Twelve Principles for Prophetic Ministry – This is a discussion of 12 points of prophetic ministry that is designed to help the congregation think beyond the familiar and the existing and see how it can begin meeting the relevant needs of the community and it's members.
F. The Ideal Church – This process is designed to give those in attendance an opportunity to design what an Ideal Church would look like. The Ideal church is created without barriers such as members, money, structure, location or cooperation. Therefore all ideas are accepted and no idea is without merit.

Why Are Core Values Important

Values determine ministry_____

Values inspire_____

Values influence overall_____

Values motivate people to_____

Values communicate what is_____

Values embrace_____

Values enhance_____

Values shape ministry_____

Values contribute to ministry _____and_____

Values determine the ministry's_____

Defining, Discovering, and Developing your Core Values

Core values are the constant, passionate, biblical beliefs that drive ministry. Every congregation institution and/or ministry unit has a set of values that guide what is done and what it seeks to accomplish. Core values are a part of the corporate culture and every congregation or ministry has a cultural distinctiveness to it, whether it articulates it or not.

The culture of a ministry unit will consist of is traditions, its rituals, its stories, its Heroes and Sheroes, its expectations, its norms, its symbols, its styles and its values.

How do you rate the following values from 1-5 1 = highest, 5 = lowest

_____Godly servant leadership

_____Praise and Worship

_____Christian Education (all ages)s

_____A well-mobilized lay ministry

_____Bible centered preaching/teaching

_____Welcoming Visitors

_____Ministry with the poor and marginalized

_____Creative and innovation

_____World Mission

_____People matter to God

_____An attractive facility

_____The status quo

_____Financial responsibility

_____Cultural relevance

_____Intercessory Prayer

_____Sustained excellence/quality

_____Fellowship/community

_____Evangelism

_____Strong families

_____A grace orientation to life

_____A Christian self-image

_____Giving/tithing

_____Counseling

_____Social Justice

_____Civil/equal rights

_____Committed Christians

_____Environment

_____Stewardship

_____Prayer

_____Other_____

APPENDIX B

EVANGELISM WORKSHOP

ASBURY-MOUNT OLIVE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
Evangelism that Leads to Future Sustainability
2007

During every period of renewal, the Church has been universally committed to six theological principles:

1. **The Lordship Principle:** a clear focus on Jesus Christ as the object of faith.

2. **The Biblical Principle:** scriptural truth as the primary source for what we believe and do.

3. **The Liturgical Principle:** discovery of new worship forms.

4. **The Covenant Principle:** commitment to the integrity of membership.

5. **The Priesthood Principle:** equipping the laity for ministry.

6. **The Leadership Principle:** spiritual entrepreneurship.

The church must have Christ-centered pastors and leaders. They must be spiritual entrepreneurs who are committed to these theological principles. Commitment to the prophetic message of these principles is essential for renewal to take place in the church today.

Church renewal is more than an increase in numbers and budgets. Many gimmicks can be employed to persuade people to come and sit in church pews. If our only goal was to increase attendance, we couldn't even pay people to attend church. But until people become committed to being faithful to the will of God, their attendance is no more meaningful than membership in any other human organization or club. *Church renewal consists of people in community with one another, dreaming God's vision, believing Christ's victory, and living out the Spirit's work.* The evidence of renewal will be seen in transformed lives.

Questions to Pray With

What are my own spiritual edges? When do I feel myself pulling back, holding on, resisting letting go, and what am I holding on to?

What are our corporate/congregational spiritual edges? Where do we collectively lean backwards, instead of forwards?

What are our corporate missional edges, that is, where is our purpose extending itself into the future, and what practical, real-world risks does this entail?

What practices and behaviors encourage me risk, to experience risk, to learn how to recognize the effect of risk on myself and my community, so that the dynamic of risk can be used to guide and energize myself and our congregation?

For me personally, what are the gaps between my talk and my walk?

For my congregation or ministry work area, what are the gaps between talk and walk?

What are the times when I feel power flowing through me?

TOUCH:
The Key to Evangelism and Church Growth

I. Beyond Growth Theories

Bryant Myers in "Walking with the Poor" asserts that the two-tiered approach of the world is a "false dichotomy that separates evangelism as spiritual activity of the church from the social action of the physical realm." Jesus in Matthew 25:45 melds the physical meeting of needs for "the least of these" to the spiritual connection to Jesus emphasizing the inseparable nature of spiritual and physical; in the gospels. In turn, Transformational Development transcends the specifics of material and economic improvement and expands the effort to include the spiritual, emotional, social, and material empowerment of the whole person and the entire community.

Transformational Development requires us to discern the changes that are taking place in our communities for the benefit of those who are blinded by poverty, disenfranchisement, and oppression.

II. The Touch Theory

Our book "Touched: The Power of Touch in Transforming a Life" (Release September 2006) looks at the power of physical, spiritual, and emotional touch in altering circumstance in our lives and ultimately our communities.

T. Truth= Vulnerability and Transparency

According to Robert Linthicum, helping people to believe that they can transform their communities through **reflection- action-reflection** is a pedagogy (teaching method) that frees people from the old controls of "how we've always done it" mentalities? When a community acts or moves in the direction of the felt needs of their community, their action then affects the ability of the group to envision other possibilities. Subsequently doors are opened to innovative responses in future actions. The deeper reflection the loftier the ensuring action creating the upward spiraling effect of action leading to reflection leading to further action. This methodology leads to us to confront the truths surrounding our existence in our respective positions and communities.

The following questions must be asked:

1. Who are the people in the most pain in your community?

2. What does the community say about your church behind your back?

3. Would your church be missed by the community if one day without warning it no longer existed?
4. Would anyone in your community (not church members) come to your defense as a leader if you were removed from your church by a small fraction of influencers?

5. Do you have the passion for Jesus that is required to transform your church and community?

O. Others Focused

In the book "Empowering the Poor" Robert Linthicum outlines three responses that any faith community can give to facilitate community renewal and revitalization;
it can either be a church **"in"** the community, a church **"to"** the community, or a church **"with"** the community. The goal of transformational development is for to incarnate itself into the fiber of the community through relationships with the indigenous inhabitants.

U. Unconditional Acceptance – The Touch Test (Handout)

C. Community = Change

Christian Washington is an organizational change consultant and founder of Real Coaching, Inc. (real-coaching. Org) has helped many executive, Christian Leaders, and Churches become more effective. One of his insights identifies the elements in the dynamic process of change. He uses the acronym "IDEA" to help people remember and apply the principles, which apply equally well to individuals and groups principles, of people.

~ **Information**-First, people need a basic understanding of the concepts and processes. This is the current state of the person or organization's condition.

~ **Disturbance**-When new concepts or goals are injected, people experience a chaotic state in which they aren't confident or comfortable. Many people stop at this point and retreat to safety, but if they keep going, genuine and productive change is possible.

~ **Emergence**-As the person or organization grapples with the new Concepts or goals, thinking is clarified and new solutions are identified.

~ **Adaptation**-Specific steps of action may be faltering and hesitant at first, but each step builds confidence and effectiveness. Soon, the change becomes a normal part of life as the new paths become established and person or organization develops new and effective habits.

H. Hope

TOUCH: The Power of Touch in Transforming Lives (Book Excerpt)

The TOUCH Test

Instructions: Please circle the ones who would be difficult to touch in the seat next to your next Sunday morning.

~ A heavily tattooed man
~ Person with piercing through their eyelids
~ Person who shouts uncontrollably
~ Elderly single male/female
~ Barefoot man with a strong body odor
~ Teenaged male with gold teeth, baggy Pants and cap turned sideways
~ Couple living together, not married
~ Interracial couple
~ A Muslin
~ Divorced female/male
~ Non-English speaking male/female
~New Age seeker
~ Extremely overweight male/female
~ Couple with crying, screaming baby
~ Lesbian couple holding hands
~ Person with noticeable hygiene needs
~ Person who sings loud and poorly
~ Someone especially quiet and meek
~ Anglo Saxon, educated, wealthy female male
~Persons who are married
~ Woman wearing pants
~ Inarticulate well dressed male/female
~ A person who talks to themselves (loudly)
~ Recovering drug addict
~ Caucasian low-income male/female
~ Aging white male with financial resources
~ Woman with dirty bags of belongings
~ Obviously homeless person
~ Man wearing baseball cap or hat
~ Child of middle income parent
~ Teenager of middle income parent
~ Person in wheelchair
~ White person not dressed in fashion
~ A Jewish person
~ Female, more than seventy years old
~ Single male/female under thirty
~Unemployed male/female
~ White People on Welfare
~ Person who snores during service
~ African-American middle class person
~ Illiterate adult male/female
~ African-American person on welfare
~ A practicing Satanist
~ Hispanic male or female
~ Person who answers rhetorical questions during sermon
~ Asian male or female
~ Arabic male or female
~ Mildly disables (needing walkers, crutches) person
~ Highly disable person (wheelchair)
~ Gay male
~ Person walks around during service
~ A homophobic person
~ Person with alcohol on breath
~ Person with many teeth missing
~ A Buddhist
~ Emotionally disable person (unpredictable) behavior
~ Retarded youth, child or adult
~ Recent College graduate
~ Smoker
~ Political conservative
~ agnostic/Atheist
~ Religious fanatic
~ Person with dirt under fingernails and un-kept hair
~ Male wearing one or more earrings
~ Female wearing tight, short skirt
~ Ex-prisoner
~ Recovering sex addict
~ Person involved in a sex scandal
~ Male, more than seventy years old
~ Person with extremely bad breath

APPENDIX C

HOLISTIC APROACH TO STEWARDSHIP

STEWARDSHIP AS A WAY OF LIFE: A TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE APPROACH TO ESTABLISHING VIABLE CONGREGATIONS

The goal of this project is to develop a comprehensive methodology for churches to become more effective stewards. There are volumes of books, articles, workshops and seminars on the subject of stewardship, but much of what is written does not address all aspects of stewardship effectively. When this occurs, there is a general perception that stewardship is based on those aspects that are written about most.

It has been my experience and observation that when stewardship is talked about, it is in relation to raising money and establishing the annual funding campaign. When raising money and funding campaigns are ineffective, more times than not, stewardship is reduced to finding ways to cut cost.

It has also been my observation that congregations who find implementing stewardship efforts difficult and unrewarding arrive at this conclusion based on incomplete data. Underestimating the amount of work and time it takes to develop a comprehensive stewardship plan is often the reason congregations vitality is reduced.

It is my hypothesis that if congregations are given a comprehensive stewardship plan and then given ongoing technical assistance, greater overall stewardship success will be realized. I also propose that when congregations become excited about the work of ministry and using their gifts to the glory of God, financial giving will follow.

WHAT IS STEWARDSHIP?

Stewardship begins with the recognition of God's grace in our lives. God, as covenant-maker, calls individuals and communities of faith into covenantal relationship. In response to God offering us a covenant, we offer ourselves in personal discipleship and shared ministry.

As we develop as sense of personal discipleship and shared ministry we will begin to realize that effective stewardship is…

- **Bible-based**
- **Exciting**
- **Faith-strengthening**
- **Innovative**
- **Life-changing**
- **Congregation-renewing**

THE REWARDS OF EFFECTIVE STEWARDSHIP

Engaging effective stewardship in our daily lives we enable us to …

- Help members and the congregation study important stewardship issues with resources from the Bible and theology.
- Help members review their faith commitment.
- Help members grow spiritually by taking specific steps to live as stewards.
- Help members commit seriously to financial support of the church's whole ministry -- local, connectional, global.
- Realize a powerful tool for mission and stewardship education stressing the many dimensions of Christ's claim and faith response.
- Establish a recruiting base for tasks within the congregation.
- Identify interests members have in community ministries beyond the local church setting.
- Help members share in and feel a part of the ministry of the church.
- Help members recognize their part in the global community.
- Help individuals to see moral issues at stake in government policy debates and to advocate in timely, responsible and effective way.

AREAS OF LIFE AFFECTED BY STEWARDSHIP

Stewardship is a life-changing encounter. The apostle Paul wrote, ***"It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me"*** **(Gal. 2:20a NRSV)**

PERSONAL LIFE

Part of the Christian life is the conscious and regular commitment to disciplines that help us become faithful disciples of Jesus Christ. This includes managing one's self, one's inner life and mind, as well as personal habits and relationships.

COMMUNITY LIFE

Christian faith is always personal but **never only private**. We are called by Christ to a community where we rejoice together, bear each others burdens, share responsibility for encouraging one another in the faith, and reaching out together to the world around us proclaiming the good news of God's love in word and deed.

PUBLIC LIFE

Stewardship is our joyful, grateful response to God by which we accept responsibility for the kind of world in which we live and the kind of world God is determined to make. Government is the way we decide how to live together as a nation and how to relate to other nations.

FINANCIAL LIFE

Both the Old and New Testaments teach that all we have is a gift from God. As God's stewards and people of faith, we are taught to bring to God the first fruits. For many Christians, money is symbolic of the first fruits, and the faithful use of it is a source of great blessing.

Money is important. It is the medium we use to accomplish many of the church's goals, and it is through money that we participate in aspects of the church's mission that would otherwise be closed to us. Our financial support enables the church's ministries of proclamation and justice seeking, and of service and compassion to be realized locally, nationally, and internationally. Therefore, a commitment of money as a spiritual discipline is at the heart of our Christian responsibility.

How much should I commit? While the tithe is encouraged, some people can give more than ten percent while others are not in a position to reach that mark. Proportionate giving is stressed as a discipline way to express our most thoughtful reflection about the magnitude of God's gifts and our responsibilities in family, church, community and our world.

Through effective stewardship efforts, proportionate giving will lead to a commitment to tithe over time.

BIBLICAL BASIS FOR STEWARDSHIP

The Bible is replete with text featuring an emphasis on stewardship. Below are a few areas where a stewardship tour of the bible can be taken.

* The Pentateuch	(**Gen**. 1:28; 2:5, 2:19; 6-8**; Ex**. 13:11-1 23:16-19; 19:5-6**; Lev**. 27:30-32; **Num** 18:20-32; **Deut**. 14:22-29)
* Job	(Chapters 29-31)
*Psalms	(24:12; 145:13; 145:15-16)
*The Prophets	(**Isa** 1:12-17; 5:8; 58: 6-7; **Am**. 6:4-6; **Mic.** 2:2)
*The Gospels	(**Lk** 7:41-43; 10:29-37; 12:16-21; 12:42-48; 13:6-9; 16:1-9; 16:19-31 19:11-17; **Mt** 13:44; 13:45-46; 18:23-25 20:1-16; 25:1-13; 25: 14-30; 25: 31-46 **Mk** 8:35; 10:23; 10:29-30; 12:17; 12:43-44
*The Apostle Paul	(**1Cor** 4:1-2; 4:7; 3:3;16:1-14; **2Cor** 8-9; **Rom** 12:6-8; 12:13; **Eph** 5:5)

The biblical study of stewardship is uncomfortable when its aim is simply to find a few texts that will keep Christians from enough of their surplus cash to keep the institutional church running one more year.

It is far more uncomfortable when its aim is to lay out the whole biblical panorama of stewardship and show its application, not just to Sunday giving, but to the economic order and style of life to which we have become accustomed.

As our culture grows more and more selfish, more and more materialistic and power hungry, such a study becomes a matter of life and death. May the Holy Spirit give us the courage to listen to the whole of God's word and to reshape our lives as true stewards of all of God's gifts.

STEWARDSHIP ILLUSIONS

*People do not "automatically" respond to the gospel with good giving habits.

*Regular church attendance does not translate into strong stewardship levels.

*Churches cannot wait until people grow spiritually so they will give; some people cannot grow spiritually until they decide to give. And asking people to improve their treasure management is asking them to grow spiritually—the two matters cannot be separated. When we look at principles for vial stewardship, we are looking at principles that can help people grow spiritually

Why Is It So Hard For Some Folks To Talk About money?

LET'S TALK ABOUT THE MONEY!

"Giving is based on the individual's need to give, not on the church's need to receive." How you give says a lot about your understanding of the love of God, your core values and your love for worldly goods and services.

Reasons why we give

A. Fear
B. Sense of duty
C. Guilt
D. Love
E. Need to feel important

Reasons why we don't give

A. Misdirected anger
B. Addiction to worldly goods and services
C. Personal feelings of inadequacy
D. Lack of spiritual discipline
E. Diminished trust in the church, system and God
F. A sense of tremendous anxiety

What's beneath our anxiety?

A. Living beyond our means
B. Trying to keep up with the "Jones'"
C. Ashamed of our personal financial condition

Thermometer or Thermostat

It has been said that as spiritual leaders, we're either thermometers that only report what is…or thermostats that regulate and govern what is. God has given us the power and the authority to be thermostats, but too many spiritual leaders are content with being thermometers.

You have to face it to fix it

As spiritual leaders, we can't guide folk where we've not been and we can't take folk where we're not willing to go ourselves. Leadership begins with the leader and if we don't have a sacrificial nature about our stewardship, then how can we expect our members to.

ORDERING OUR STEPS THROUGH CORE VALUES

"…Twenty-first century leaders will not lead by the authority of their position but by an ability to articulate a vision and core values of their…..congregations." (Bill Hybels & Ken Blanckard)

CORE VALUES ARE….

"…the constant, passionate, biblical core beliefs that drives ministry" (Malphurs)

A. Biblical
B. Constant
C. Passionate
D. Core Beliefs
E. As spiritual leaders, we each have a set of core values that guides what we do and what we seek to accomplish. Our core values become a part of the culture of our congregation whether we articulate them or not. Our core values are based upon:

A. Our Traditions
B. Our Rituals
C. Our Stories
D. Our Heroes and Sheroes
E. Our Expectations
F. Our Norms
G. Our Symbols
H. Our Style
I. Our Values

THE CHURCH APPORTIONMENT

APPORTIONMENT DEFINED

The apportionment is an amount assigned to a local church or annual conference to be raised as its share of the general church and conference funds. In a very simplistic way, apportionment is another way of saying "a portion meant for someone else."

A more complete and holistic way of understanding and defining apportionment is broad based giving providing compassionate ministries in many place and for many person beyond the local church.

Connectional giving is another way to express apportionment. When we give connectionally, our gifts are administered to create ministry and mission via our general boards and agencies. At the annual conference level, our gifts create ministry and mission opportunities through our various committees, ministry groups and the cabinet.

CONNECTIONAL GIVING OPPORTUNITIES

A. Apportionment
B. Estates
C. Wills
D. Endowments
E. Cash contributions
F. Insurance
G. Living Trusts

THE CHURCH BUDGET

BUDGET DEFINED

A budget is a statement or report of estimated expenditures and income. It is the amount of money assigned to a particular purpose.

A budget is a promise. It is the commitment to meet a set of objectives, to deliver a set of products or services for a predetermined and fixed level of expenditure.

TYPES OF BUDGETS

A. Program Budget
B. Expense Budget
C. Zero Based Budget (Income budget)
D. Line Item Budget
E. Narrative Budget

The church budget is:

The official document by which we place God on notice concerning the limitations we plan to put on God's grace in this church for the coming year.

FINANCIALLY HEALTHY CONGREGATIONS

A. You can pay all current expenses on time
B. You have adequate funds for emergencies
C. You keep sufficient undesignated reserves
D. Your giving campaign is effective and ongoing
E. Your membership supports missions beyond the local church

FINANCIALLY UNHEALTHY CONGREGATIONS

A. You have a low ratio between fixed cost and the number of giving units. (individuals or households that contribute regularly)
B. You have inadequate emergency reserves.

RESTORING YOUR CONGREGATIONS FINANCIAL HEALTH

A. Implement effective stewardship campaigns
B. Lead by example
C. Stabilize expenses
D. Educate your members
E. Communicate your successes and your goals
F. Issue regular financial reports
G. Budget to fulfill your congregations goals and calling
H. Build sufficient financial reserves
I. Involve more members in financial concerns
J. Consider drastic options

FACTOIDS

A. Healthy congregations focus on stewardship rather than fundraising
B. There is a difference in funding the budget and funding ministry
C. Funding the budget is based on how much money you can get
D. Funding ministry is based on helping persons to be the givers God intends for them to be
E. People do not give to fund a budget. They give to support what they see as meaningful and worthwhile ministries
F. People want to feel that their gifts support effective ministries
G. Often times, financial campaigns are run by the wrong committee

BUDGET DEVELOPMENT

A. Needs and missional activities are identified across the church
B. Key leaders receive list and request
C. Committee review and evaluate
D. Committee set priorities and project cost are set
E. Committee put funds for the needs into a budget plan
F. Church adopts budget

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